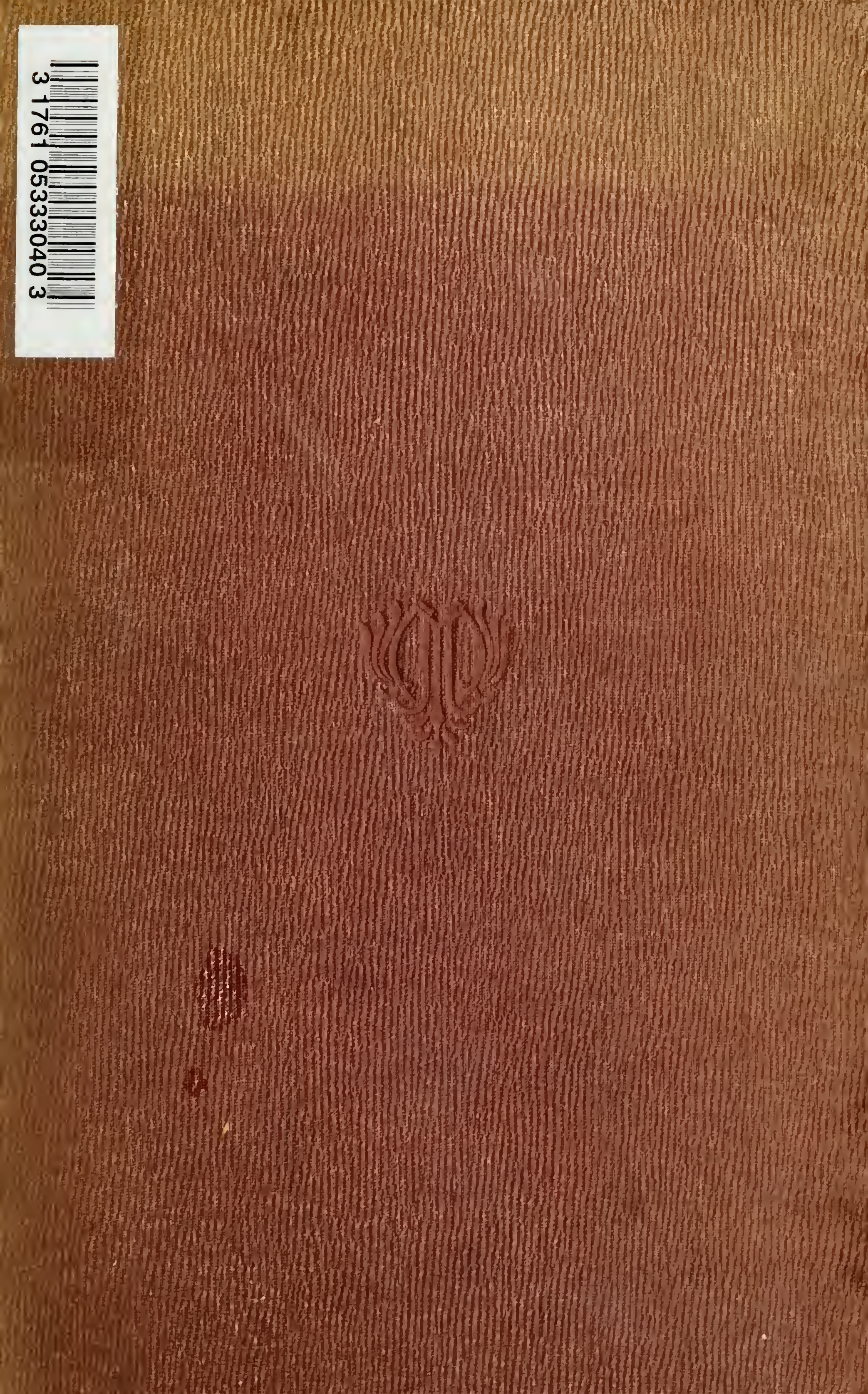
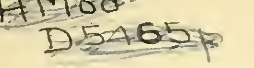

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THE PEASANT STATE.

AN ACCOUNT OF BULGARIA

IN 1894.

By EDWARD DICEY, C.B.

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THE PEASANT STATE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

FOR myself, as for all persons whose tastes or pursuits or occupations have led them to devote much attention to foreign affairs, the Eastern Question has always possessed a peculiar fascination. Whatever view you may take in respect of European politics, and of England's relation towards them; whether you are a Philo-Russ or Russophobe; whether you are an Imperial Federationist, or a disciple of the "Little England" school; whether your sympathies are Liberal or Conservative, Progressive or Reactionary, you cannot, I think, escape the conclusion that the organization of Europe, as it has been known to us since the close of the Napoleonic Wars, must suffer a radical change whenever the fate of Turkey in Europe is definitely determined. In common, I fancy, with every man who has ever studied the subject attentively, I have long ago come to the conclusion that the days of Turkey, at any rate as a European Power, are numbered. Threatened men, as we all know, live long; but a period which is long in the life of an individual is a mere moment in the life of a nation; and it seems to me well-nigh a certainty that before the generation which is now entering

on its public career has passed away into the unknown, the Turks will no longer be the masters of Constantinople. I have no occasion to discuss the question whether this change, when it occurs, will be one for the better or the worse. All I am concerned with is the fact—for such I believe it to be—that the change is certain and imminent. Holding these views, I have long taken great interest in speculations as to what will happen after the expulsion of the Turks from Europe as a dominant race. My original impression had been that there were only two possible solutions of the Eastern Question. The first, the most probable, and to my mind the least desirable, is the substitution of Russia for Turkey as the possessor of Constantinople; the second, the least probable, but to my thinking the most desirable, is the substitution in place of Turkey of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The idea of a revival by Greece of the old Byzantine Monarchy does not, I think, come within the domain of practicable politics. I may add that all my observation of the Christian races subject to Moslem rule had rendered me hitherto extremely sceptical as to the possibility of their ever being able to supply the place of Turkey in Europe, or to form an effective barrier against Russian aggrandizement.

On the other hand, I knew that in this latter respect my views were not altogether shared by persons who had exceptional means of acquaintance with the conditions of the Eastern Question. Amongst others, Sir William White had frequently assured me that the States of the Balkan Peninsula, if they were allowed time to develop themselves and consolidate their resources, might prove formidable obstacles to any advance of Russia towards

the Bosphorus. He had often expressed to me his conviction that Bulgaria was a country with a future before her not unlike that under which Piedmont had become the centre of a united Italy. I may here, too, recall the fact that on the last occasion, if I remember rightly, when I saw my old friend Mr. W. E. Forster, before his death, I found him keenly excited about the war between Bulgaria and Servia, which was then imminent. To some casual remark of mine, that I did not think it mattered much to anybody beyond the parties immediately concerned, whether the Serbs beat the Bulgars, or the Bulgars the Serbs, he remarked, as far as I can recall his words, "I am sure that you are wrong in this. If ever you travel through Bulgaria and see the people, as I have done myself, you will feel very differently, and will be convinced, as I am, that the independent existence of Bulgaria is a matter of European importance."

These, and many similar utterances on the part of acquaintances of mine, whose minds were unbiassed by any sentimental or theological sympathies with the Christian races under Turkish rule, and who knew what they were talking about, had long caused me to desire to visit Bulgaria, and to form my own judgment as to whether the Bulgarians really did differ in any material respect from other Christian communities, governed or misgoverned, as the case may be, under Moslem dominion; and if such a difference existed, what were the causes and the main characteristics of its existence. At the commencement of this year circumstances enabled me to fulfil this long-cherished wish, and the result of my researches is contained in the following pages.

Here, at the outset, perhaps, better than elsewhere,

I may say something as to the extent to which my study of Bulgaria has modified my previous opinion as to the possibility of her playing an important part in the cataclysm which must ensue upon the downfall of the Ottoman Empire. I have come with great reluctance to the conclusion that the creation of the Dual Monarchy in Austria, or, in other words, the concession of Home Rule to Hungary, has paralyzed Austria as a European Power just as the concession of Home Rule in Ireland would paralyze the United Kingdom. There is, therefore, little likelihood of Austria's being able to step into the place of Turkey. The removal of Austria as a possible candidate for the inheritance of "The Sick Man of Europe" cannot but favour the prospects of Russia. If this is so, there is clearly a distinct increase of probability that the ultimate solution of the Eastern Question will prove to be the acquisition of Constantinople by Russia, a contingency which must in all human likelihood entail the gradual conversion of all the States of the Balkan Peninsula into Russian Provinces.

Fortunately, the "Unspeakable Turk" dies hard and dies slowly; and the longer the Crescent rules at Constantinople, the greater chance there is of the Balkan States consolidating their independence. I am doubtful about Servia, and not confident as to Roumania. But I am now convinced that Bulgaria contains the main elements required to constitute a powerful nationality. All that is needed for the development of these elements is time; and if Turkey in Europe can only hold together for another generation, Bulgaria may possibly become so potent a factor in the Oriental Problem as to alter the conditions under which the Eastern Question will have

ultimately to be solved. I do not say that Bulgaria is as yet an effective bulwark against Russian aggression; but I do say that she is in a fair way of becoming such a bulwark, and that she therefore deserves the support and sympathy of all who, in common with myself, regard the possible Russification of Eastern Europe with dismay and dread.

I have endeavoured, in the following chapters, to explain the peculiar and exceptional conditions which have rendered Bulgaria so utterly different from all the other Christian States which passed under the sway of Islam on the decline and fall of the Byzantine Empire. My investigations led me also to the—to me novel—conclusion, that Bulgaria is the most perfect specimen of a peasant State, either existing nowadays, or recorded in the annals of our present era. In all the works I have consulted on Bulgaria, I have never seen this peculiar aspect of her internal organization dwelt upon with any fulness. I presume that during the troubled times, when Bulgaria attracted a large share of foreign notice, the attention of the outer world was chiefly turned to the vexed question of the genuineness or otherwise of the "Bulgarian atrocities," to the vicissitudes of the Russo-Turkish War, to the fall of Plevna, to the capture of the Shipka Pass, and later on, to the romantic reign of the hero of Slievnitza, to his abduction and subsequent abdication. It is only fair to add that, for many years after her liberation from Turkish rule, it seemed well-nigh certain that Bulgaria could have no permanent individual existence of her own; and that, for good or evil, it was her manifest destiny to be absorbed in Russia, or, at the best, to revolve as a sort of minor planet in the orbit of the

Muscovite sun. Under these circumstances, her internal organization possessed but little interest for any one save her own people. Of late years, however, it has been seen to be possible, and even probable, that Bulgaria may take a permanent and independent place amidst the States of Europe. The question, therefore, of her internal organization has become a matter of European concern.

For Englishmen in particular, quite apart from their general interest in the Eastern Question, this aspect of Bulgaria possesses a special importance. Public attention in England has in our days been greatly attracted to the advantages of a peasant proprietary. The merits or demerits of such a system lie for the present beyond the range of party politics. Liberals and Conservatives are alike agreed to accept, as an axiom of political economy, the dictum that, in a well-regulated state, the mass of the community ought by rights to have a personal, individual stake in the land. Our public men seem to be coming round to the belief that the ideal State would be one best described by the saying attributed to Henry IV. of France, that he hoped to see the day when every French peasant would have a fowl in his pot. We have endeavoured, by legislation, to create a class of small peasant land-owners in Ireland; we are contemplating the possibility of creating such a class in England. It needs no great political foresight to prophesy that "the three acres and a cow" theory, originated by Mr. Chamberlain, will soon become the recognized stock-in-trade of every political party which stands in need of the agricultural vote. Again, an important and increasing section of the Liberal party at home has taken up the view that large accumulations of private fortune are an evil to be discouraged, if

not prevented, by legislation ; and that, in the new era which it is hoped to inaugurate, capital and pauperism will be alike comparatively unknown quantities. I am not an ardent political economist. I am not, perhaps, much of a believer in any scheme for the reorganization of society on a new and a better basis. But my personal views as to the progress of humanity are of no great interest to myself, and of none at all to the world at large. I shall not, therefore, obtrude any views I may hold on this subject in these pages. My endeavour is confined to a wish to show that Bulgaria, as at present constituted, approaches as closely as is consistent with the imperfection of all human institutions to the ideal State of our latter-day social reformers, in which there are to be no poor and no rich, in which every citizen is to have a share, and to a considerable extent an equal share, in the land of the commonwealth, in which there are to be no privileged classes and no social distinctions, and in which the people, who in the case of Bulgaria are the peasants, are to govern themselves by themselves and for themselves.

It has been my object, in forming my opinions as to the present condition of Bulgaria, to keep an open mind. I have tried to explain the general causes which have brought about the peculiar social and economical conditions of Bulgaria. I have endeavoured to do justice to the peculiar qualities of race and character which are partly the cause, partly the effect, of her present system of government, and her existing social organization. I have also tried to indicate the defects inseparable from the state of things under which alone a peasant community is a possibility. Anybody acquainted with peasant life, as it exists in naked reality not in fiction, can fill in for

himself the various failings, social, physical, and intellectual, to which I have had cause to allude frequently. But I have made no attempt to strike a balance between the advantages and disadvantages of such a social fabric as the one I have sought to describe. In Bulgaria, as elsewhere, my rule has been to take things very much as I find them, to describe these things as they are in fact, not as they ought to be in theory; and to leave it to others to decide whether the things so described are in harmony with the abstract principles which govern, or are supposed to govern, the condition of humanity. Those who wish to find arguments or illustration, whether for or against the "three acres and a cow" school of political economy, may probably find both in what I have written. For my part, I have no theory to advocate one way or the other. I shall be content if I succeed in calling attention to a very exceptional social organization, which in all human likelihood must be transitory; and I know of no better term under which to describe this organization than the title I have chosen for this book, that of "The Peasant State."

HISTORY OF THE PEASANT STATE.

CHAPTER II.

THE BULGARIAN NATIONALITY.

It is my object to deal with the present and future of Bulgaria, not with the past. But in order to understand the present it is necessary to recall the past; and for this reason, I wish to show how Bulgaria, as now constituted, has a genuine claim to be called a nation.

The Low Countries have been described as the cockpit of Europe. The Balkan Peninsula has a much better title to this historic appellation. Hordes of barbarians, one after another, moved by some unknown impulse, poured in endless succession from Central Asia into Europe during the decline of the Roman Empire, crossed the Balkans on their march southwards; occupied the land, which is now called Bulgaria, for periods of indefinite duration; and after years, or it may be centuries, of sojourn, moved further afield, either in search of new pastures, or because they were themselves driven onwards by the advance of some fresh horde of wanderers, following along the same track that their predecessors had pursued. This page of European history is so utterly obscure, that

it is matter of dispute whether the Sclav invasion first crossed the Danube three or six centuries after the birth of Christ. All that seems even approximately certain is that within the above-named limits the Sclavs occupied the various regions which we now know as Russia, Poland, Bohemia, Transylvania, Macedonia, Roumelia, and Bulgaria, and established themselves in these regions as masters, either destroying the original occupants or absorbing them in their own dominant nationality.

The whole history of these remote times appears to me to be contained in the words of Scripture, that "when the strong man fully armed guardeth his own court, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him his whole armour . . . and divideth his spoils." The Sclavs of the Balkan Peninsula met with their stronger man in the person of the Bulgars, a Tartar tribe, kindred in race to the Turks, who, towards the close of the seventh century, swept down across the Balkans, carrying all before them. I feel the utmost of diffidence in expressing any opinion of my own as to the history of this obscure and distant era. My knowledge on this subject is of the most superficial kind, derived solely from what little I have read. But I give, for what it is worth, the impression left on my mind from cursory reading, and from local traditions, that the Bulgars, though they have bequeathed their name to the country over which they once ruled, never occupied it or settled themselves in it, in the same sense as their predecessors, the Sclavs, had done. In common with their kinsmen the Turks, the Bulgars were a ruling race, a tribe of predatory warriors; but as their power and their vigour died away, they became

gradually merged in the subject race, over whom they had originally held mastery as conquerors, and adopted the Sclav language and the Sclav nationality. Since the era of the Bulgars, Greeks, Serbs, Turks, have in succession held sway over Bulgaria; but for some twelve centuries the population of Bulgaria have remained Sclavs in race and language, and—though for a period of less duration—Sclavs in religion. The Bulgarians, in fact, claim upwards of a thousand years of distinct nationality; and if this claim is not sufficient to constitute a nation, few of the peoples of Europe have any ground to consider themselves an historic nationality.

Personally, I attach more importance to the fact that the Bulgarians have held long and uninterrupted possession of the soil on which they dwell, than I do to their traditions of bygone greatness. The whole history of the Balkan Peninsula, from the establishment of the Byzantine Empire down to the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, is one long unintelligible and confused record of internecine wars between Greeks, Turks, Serbs, Wallachs, and Bulgarians. Sometimes one race got the upper hand, sometimes the other. Ever and anon a powerful chief arose in this remote quarter of Europe; made war successfully upon his neighbours; extended his dominions over the surrounding states; and called himself King, Cæsar, Czar, Emperor, as the case might be. The Bulgarians had their fair share of these ephemeral dynasties. In the ninth century, there was a certain Boris, the national hero of Bulgaria, after whom the infant son of Prince Ferdinand has just been named. Boris founded the first Bulgarian Monarchy; made himself lord and master of the whole Balkan Peninsula,

almost down to the shores of the Ægean Sea; negotiated with Rome; and finally became a convert, and forced his people to become converts, to the faith of the orthodox Eastern Church. His son, Simian, another of the national legendary heroes, made war against the Greek Empire; besieged Constantinople with his armies, and actually captured Adrianople; and assumed the proud title of Czar of the Bulgarians, and Autocrat of the Greeks. Later on, the Russians invaded Bulgaria for the first time; and in order to repel the invaders, the then Czar, Simian, had to call in the aid of the Greek Emperor, who, in return, deposed him from his throne, and converted Bulgaria into a province of the empire. Again, some two centuries after the overthrow of the Boris dynasty, a Bulgarian of the name of Asen induced his fellow-countrymen to rise in insurrection against the tyranny of Constantinople, and declared himself the Czar of Bulgaria. The story of the Asen dynasty, in as far as it is known, is one of continued warfare, waged with fluctuating fortunes against the Greek Empire. The only difference between the dynasties of Boris and of the Aseni is that, while both were always at war with their neighbours, and always sided with one or the other of the Powers who were engaged in breaking up the Byzantine Empire, the latter dynasty devoted great energy to the development of its own dominions. Asen and his successors established industries, encouraged trade, availed themselves of foreign teachers in arts and commerce, and succeeded for a brief period in making Bulgaria a prosperous and progressive country.

After this, the Golden Age of Bulgaria, the country fell for a time under the sway of Servia. Finally, at the

close of the fourteenth century, the Turks made their appearance on the scene. From that time till the other day Bulgaria remained a province of European Turkey. Such, in the shadowest of outlines, is the general history of the State which, within the last twenty years, has recovered its national existence.

CHAPTER III.

THE GENESIS OF MODERN BULGARIA.

It is not my purpose, as I have said before, to write a history of Bulgaria. But of all periods of time, the ones with which the generation of the day are most imperfectly acquainted, are those which record events that occurred long enough ago to get blurred in men's memories, and yet are of too recent date to be enshrined in history. I feel convinced that there are a hundred educated Englishmen who, if pressed, could give a fair account of the Wars of the Roses, or of the American Declaration of Independence, for one who could supply an intelligible version of the events which led up to our occupation of Egypt during the decade that preceded the battle of Tel-el-Kebir. In the same way, I fancy, a very considerable proportion of my countrymen and countrywomen, even amongst the classes who take an intelligent interest in foreign affairs, would find it extremely difficult to recall the sequence of events, which, in a period of less than twenty years, has converted Bulgaria from an obscure Turkish Pashalik into an independent State. Yet a general knowledge of these events is absolutely essential to realize the progress already made by Bulgaria, and still more that which she is likely to make in the near future. In order, therefore, to render intelligible what I shall have

to say later on, let me endeavour to tell, as briefly as I can, the outline of the story which records the genesis of the Bulgaria of to-day.

Bulgaria owes her independence to the Russian invasion of Turkey in 1877. The motives which prompted Russia to take up arms for the liberation of the Bulgars may not have been disinterested; the obligations imposed on the Bulgars by this intervention may have been more than cancelled by the subsequent conduct of their liberators. Still the fact remains that, but for Russia, Bulgaria would to-day be a Turkish Province, ruled by Turkish officials in the same way as Macedonia is now. No doubt, for many years past—in fact, ever since the Greek War of Independence—there had been an intermittent agitation in Bulgaria, as in all the other Christian provinces of the Ottoman Empire, against the domination of the Turks. I fancy, however, from all I can learn, that this agitation was less active and less general in Bulgaria than it was elsewhere. The Bulgars are a far less excitable race than the bulk of their Sclav fellow-kinsmen; their religion is not fanatical; their minds are mainly taken up with the tillage of their farms; they are not, like the Greeks, born politicians and agitators; their great desire is to be let alone to look after their own affairs. A country of small peasant farmers, with no wealthy and educated class, and with no natural leaders either by birth or tradition, is not a promising soil for the development of an armed insurrection against the powers that be. At any rate, I can see no evidence to show that, till Russia appeared on the scene, there was any formidable national agitation amongst the Bulgarians for the overthrow of Turkish rule. To admit this is not tantamount to saying that the Bulgarians were

contented with their lot. The few traders and landowners who were in a position to afford the expense, sent their sons to be educated abroad ; and these sons returned home imbued with Western ideas and eager to see their country delivered from Moslem thraldom. I suspect there are few, if any, of the men, now occupying important positions in Bulgarian public life, who were not in their hot youths implicated in conspiracies and in secret associations for the emancipation of Bulgaria. They would all tell you, if they spoke the truth, that though at this period they had the sympathy and good wishes of their fellow-countrymen, they did not meet with the popular support which is required to make a revolution. They would, I think, also admit—though with reluctance—that their original idea was to effect a revolution by Russian aid ; that they were in constant communication with the agents of the Sclav propaganda in Russia ; and that they had most of them received not only instructions but active assistance from Russia.

The Bulgars took little or no part in the Turko-Servian War in 1875 ; but when the war ended in the virtual emancipation of the Serbs, the time had manifestly come when it was incumbent upon their neighbours to take action which might force the hand of the Czar, and thus necessitate Muscovite intervention. The whole story of the abortive Bulgarian rising in 1876 is singularly obscure. What its intrinsic importance was, who were its leaders and instigators, and what, if any, was the programme of the insurgents, are all matters on which it is difficult to express any definite opinion. The one thing certain is that the rising was suppressed by the Turks with relentless severity. That it must have been so suppressed is evident

à priori to any one acquainted with the Eastern system of administration. So long as the Giaour pays his taxes and respects the authority of Islam, he is allowed to do pretty much what he likes in other respects; but, if he rises in rebellion against his rulers, the hand of his lord and master comes down with overwhelming force. Not to strike without necessity, but when you have to strike, to strike a knock-down blow, such is the principle of Oriental statesmanship. Less than a score of years ago, a village near Keneh, where English tourists now make halt daily during the Nile season, rose in insurrection against the authority of the then Khedive, partly in resentment of excessive taxation, partly in deference to religious fanaticism. A local Mahdi had taken it into his head to preach the duty of returning to the true faith of Islam, had denounced Ismail Pasha as one who consorted with infidels, and had exhorted the faithful to refuse obedience to the officials of the Government. The appeal met with some response, and next time the tax collectors appeared at the village they were driven away with violence. On learning this, the Khedive sent down a body of troops under orders to surround the village with a cordon, and to kill every man, woman, child, and living thing within the precincts. The order was carried out literally, and no more was ever heard of the Keneh Mahdi or of the Keneh insurrection. And, what is more, I could never discover that this wholesale massacre offended in any way such public opinion as exists in Egypt. It was only the regular way in which insurrections had always been dealt with; and, after all, it achieved its purpose. If the Turks act in this fashion towards men of their own faith, it is only natural they should have, if possible, still

less scruple in inflicting condign punishment on rebellious subjects belonging to an alien race and a hostile creed. I have not, therefore, the slightest doubt in my own mind that the insurrection in Bulgaria was put down by the Turks in a fashion utterly inconsistent with our ideas of law and justice, not to mention humanity. But whether there were fifteen thousand, or fifteen hundred, or one hundred and fifty Bulgarians killed, or which of the various atrocities alleged to have been perpetrated had any foundation in fact, I have no idea myself, nor have I met with any one who could give me reliable information on the point. I have seen enough of Eastern countries to entertain the utmost distrust of any specific statement of fact with regard to occurrences which are alleged to have taken place there, no matter on what authority the statement may be based. We at home are too well acquainted with Mr. Gladstone's utter incapacity to see more than one side of any question, to repose implicit confidence upon the evidence on which he founded his famous indictment of the Bulgarian atrocities. Still Mr. Gladstone's pamphlet served its purpose; and undoubtedly the Anti-Turkish demonstration, led by Mr. Gladstone, encouraged the Russians in the mistaken belief that England would acquiesce in any fresh aggression against Turkey, and thereby contributed directly to the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish War.

The war was waged between the Turks on the one hand, and the Russians, assisted by the Roumanians, on the other. The Bulgarians, for whose sake the battle was nominally being fought, were rather spectators than actors in the contest. Their sympathies were, no doubt, enthusiastically enlisted on the side of the Russians, to

whom they furnished most valuable aid in the shape of information. A considerable number of volunteer regiments were raised, and took part in the fighting. Still, even the Bulgarians themselves would hardly allege that the success of the campaign was mainly due to their assistance. If this was so there is no cause for blame. The peasants had had no military training or organization; they were very imperfectly provided with arms; they were cowed to some extent by the cruel reprisals which had followed the abortive insurrection; and, above all, they were haunted by the dread of being left at the mercy of their enemies, if the defeat of the Turks should not prove to be of a decisive character.

Anyhow, the Russians conquered; and, in the flush of their victory, when their armies were almost within sight of Constantinople, they concluded the Treaty of San Stefano, by one of whose clauses Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia were to be formed into an autonomous and independent State under Russian protection. The Western Powers, however, acting chiefly on the instigation of England, refused to ratify the Treaty of San Stefano. A Congress was held at Berlin to settle the terms of peace between Russia and Turkey. At this period Bulgaria was regarded as a mere outpost of Russia; and, in consequence, the Western Powers, who were opposed to the advance of Russia towards the Bosphorus, deemed it their interest to curtail in many ways the proposed enfranchisement of Bulgaria. By the Treaty of Berlin, Roumelia was not allowed to be incorporated with Bulgaria; the Turks were secured the right of erecting fortifications on the Bulgarian Balkans, a right which they have never exercised, or dreamt of exercising; and,

finally, the titular sovereignty of Bulgaria was also restored to the Sultan, though no attempt was made to interfere with the autonomy of the country. The Russians were also allowed by the treaty to exercise a provisional protectorate over Bulgaria till such time as the new Constitution, which was to be provided for the province, had been got into working order.

Thus, at the close of the war, Russia, however much she may have failed in her other objects, had obtained a position of commanding strength in Bulgaria. After all, it was the Russians who had defeated the Turks and driven them out of the country; it was they who had proposed to reconstruct the ancient Bulgarian kingdom by the annexation of Roumelia; they who had fought the cause of Bulgarian independence at Berlin, and had been baffled by the interested opposition of the Western Powers; they who had the whole administration of the country for the time being in their hands; and they, above all, to whom the Bulgarians had learnt to look for protection in the present and for aggrandizement in the future. Thus, the Russians had all the winning cards in their hands; and, if they have lost their hold on Bulgaria, it is mainly, if not entirely, their own fault. Prince Donderkoff Korsakoff, who was appointed Russian Commissioner during the interregnum, made himself personally popular in Bulgaria. The Constitution framed under the instructions of the Commissioner was, in theory at any rate, of an extremely democratic character, and was, therefore, acceptable to a community in which there was no titled or wealthy class, and which was composed almost exclusively of peasants. On the other hand, the provisions of the Constitution gave very large powers to the Ministers,

who, it was taken for granted, were to be nominees, if not pensioners, of Russia. Finally, the ruler selected to govern the new State was Prince Alexander of Battenberg, a very young and, at that time, an almost unknown officer in the German army, whose sole apparent recommendation lay in the fact that he was a near relative and a personal friend of the Czar.

By a curious nemesis, the choice thus made at the instance of Russia did more than anything else to upset the proposed Russification of Bulgaria. Judging by the opinions I have heard expressed by all who came into contact with him, I should doubt whether Prince Alexander was a statesman of high capacity or of any marked administrative talent. But he was bold, high spirited, quick tempered, and, above all things, a born soldier, possessed of military talent, if not genius, and impatient for an opportunity of making this talent known. His one ambition as Prince of Bulgaria was to create and organize a native army, and he had the insight to perceive that under proper training the Bulgarians might easily be converted into excellent soldiers. This ambition ran counter to the policy of St. Petersburg. Before the prince's accession to the throne the Russians had already taken into hand the work of military reconstruction. Russian officers had been placed in command of all the important posts in the Bulgarian army. The Russian, and not the Bulgarian, dialect had been made the language in which the officers had to give orders to their troops. The uniform, the drill, and the discipline of the Bulgarian army were made, and are still, the exact counterparts of those in use in Russia. As soon as the Prince attempted to take a leading part in the organization and administration

of his own army, he was peremptorily given to understand that this was a matter with which he was not to interfere, and that the War Department must be left completely under Russian control.

We are very often told that the Russians display exceptional tact in their dealings with subject races. However this may be, they certainly showed a singular lack of tact in their relations with Prince Alexander and his subjects. The men who came to the front in Bulgaria after the Revolution were almost without exception credited with strong pro-Russian proclivities. As a written language, Bulgarian is almost identical with Russian; as a spoken language, it so closely resembles Russian that educated men in both countries have little or no difficulty in understanding each other. As there is practically no Bulgarian literature, Russian books, up to the period of which I write, supplied the mental culture of the Bulgars; all these books inculcated the doctrine that the welfare and progress of Bulgaria, as of other Sclav countries, were indissolubly connected with the advance and grandeur of the mighty Sclav Empire of the North. Yet, notwithstanding all these advantages, the Russians had no sooner got a firm footing in Bulgaria, than they contrived to give mortal offence to the very men who, when their country had recovered her independence, looked forward to playing a prominent part in her development. Both in the civil and in the military administration, the ideas, aspirations, and prejudices of the Bulgarians were either ignored or treated with contempt. Their national pride was outraged; and their eyes were rudely opened to the discovery, that in the opinion of their liberators Bulgaria was henceforward to be a mere dependency of Russia, and

that her interests and aspirations were to be subordinated in every respect to the policy of the Russian Empire. Thus it came to pass that Prince Alexander, who on his accession was regarded as a stranger, a foreigner, and a puppet of Russia, soon became the chosen representative of Bulgarian independence. His fine presence, his pleasant, open manner, and his power of ingratiating himself, were not long in winning personal popularity for the Prince amidst his new subjects; but, after all, the main cause of his influence lay in the accident that he embodied the dislike of a singularly independent and stiff-necked race, proud of their historic past and sanguine of future greatness, to be treated by their Russian protectors as an inferior and subject people. To speak truth, the Bulgarians were not long in finding out that they had replaced King Log by King Stork; and, on finding this, they bitterly resented the new servitude which had been imposed upon them.

The Ministers, whose nomination had been forced upon the Prince on his accession, obeyed blindly the orders they received from St. Petersburg; and after the death of the Czar, Alexander II., these orders became more peremptory and more offensive than ever. From and after this time there was open conflict between the native element, represented by Prince Alexander, and the Russian party in Bulgaria; and there can be little doubt that from this period the deposition of the Prince was determined upon at St. Petersburg.

The dethronement of Prince Alexander did not, however, take place till events had occurred which greatly enhanced his hold on his adopted country. In 1885 an insurrection broke out in Eastern Roumelia, which proved successful

almost without an effort; and by which the Turkish Governor-General was deposed. The first act of the Provisional Government, established at Philippopolis after the insurrection, was to proclaim the amalgamation of Eastern Roumelia with Bulgaria, under the sovereignty of Prince Alexander. The most plausible explanation of the curious policy pursued by Russia in regard to this insurrection, which was brought about by Russian partisans, is that, according to the calculations formed at St. Petersburg, it was expected that the Turks would endeavour to suppress the insurrection by similar means to those employed at the time of the Bulgarian atrocities; that the Russians would then intervene as the champions of Roumelian independence; and that, as the price of their intervention and of the consequent annexation of Roumelia to Bulgaria, they would be empowered to nominate, as ruler of the United Provinces, a prince who would prove more accessible to Russian influence than the then occupant of the throne. These calculations were upset, partly because the Turks did not think it worth their while to go to war for the nominal retention of a province which, by the Treaty of Berlin, had really passed out of their control; partly because Prince Alexander accepted the sovereignty offered him by the Provisional Government without deeming it necessary to obtain the consent of Russia or of the Powers who had signed the treaty of Berlin, by which Roumelia had been placed under a separate administration from that of her sister province.

The annexation of Roumelia was followed by the sudden withdrawal of all the Russian officers from Bulgaria. It was imagined that this withdrawal would completely disorganize the Bulgarian army. The *post hoc propter hoc*

line of argument is not one of very great weight. But, to say the least, it is a remarkable coincidence that the supposed dissolution of the Bulgarian army should have been followed by a sudden and unprovoked declaration of war on the part of Servia, the only alleged excuse for which was found in a trifling dispute as to the frontiers of the two countries. There is no need to repeat here the story how Prince Alexander, left to himself, reorganized the army, and filled up all the posts left vacant after the withdrawal of the Russians by a number of young Bulgarian officers; how, supported by popular enthusiasm, he created a new force out of almost raw materials; and how, finally, he crushed the Servian army at the battle of Slievnitza.

From the date of that victory the Prince became not only the champion of national independence, but the hero of Bulgaria. The Bulgarians indeed were deprived of the material results of their victory by the intervention of Austria in defence of Servia. Still the outcome of the campaign had made the Bulgarians the leading race in the Balkan Peninsula. In consequence, the idea of forming a confederation of the Balkan States under Prince Alexander came into prominence. Whether such a project was then, or ever will be, feasible is a question for the future to decide. It is obvious, however, that the union of the Sclav States south of the Danube would prove a fatal obstacle to the traditional policy of Russia. It became, therefore, a matter of paramount importance in the interest of Russia to crush this project in the bud by the removal of the Prince to whom, after the victory of Slievnitza, the partisans of a Balkanic Confederation had learnt to look as the chosen representative of their cause.

In 1886 the Prince was kidnapped in his own palace,

compelled to sign his abdication, and carried off as a prisoner into Russian territory on the northern banks of the Danube. The abduction gave rise to as strong a manifestation of popular sentiment in Bulgaria as could be expected in a country which had been trained for centuries in the doctrine of passive submission to the powers that be. Public opinion throughout Europe insisted upon the Prince's release, and he returned to Bulgaria amidst general demonstrations of good-will and affection. He had no sooner, however, been replaced upon his throne, than he came to the conclusion that he was fighting a too unequal contest in his struggle with Russia, and he then and there announced his abdication of the throne he had occupied so gallantly and, on the whole, with such success. The second abdication was made of his own free will, and, in the face of his apparent vacillation of purpose, it is difficult to believe that Prince Alexander was of the stuff out of which the men who make history are built. It is fair to say, on the other hand, that he showed himself a good ruler and a brave soldier, and that, under circumstances of exceptional difficulty, he won the affection and confidence of a people not prone to bestow confidence or affection lightly. Bystanders who were present when the Prince's dead body was brought to Sofia for interment assured me that, amidst the dense crowd collected along the route through which the funeral procession passed, there was scarcely a person present who was not in tears.

Upon the resignation of Prince Alexander, the Pro-Russian party again got the upper hand. General Kaulbars was sent from St. Petersburg as a sort of official liquidator of the Bulgarian difficulty; his first step was to insist on

an amnesty being granted to all persons who had been concerned in Prince Alexander's abduction. The Regents, who had been appointed when the Prince resigned, hesitated about complying with these instructions. Thereupon Russian men-of-war were sent to Varna, and the amnesty was granted. Subsequently General Kaulbars made a progress through the country and delivered a number of speeches, calling on the Bulgarians to return members to the Sobranje pledged to support Russia and to oppose the policy of the Regency. The country, however, returned an overwhelming majority in favour of the Regency. Upon this, General Kaulbars was recalled, and all diplomatic relations between Russia and Bulgaria were brought to a close. This state of things remains unchanged to the present day. An attempt was made to induce the Sobranje to elect as ruler the Prince of Mingrelia, a hanger-on of the Russian Court. The proposal, however, was rejected. The crown was then offered to Prince Waldemar of Denmark, and declined by him. Finally, after various abortive negotiations, Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg was elected as the successor of Prince Alexander. With his accession Bulgaria may be said to have commenced her existence as a State, independent alike of Turkey on the one hand and Russia on the other.

The present position of the Principality is no doubt anomalous. The Prince has been duly elected by the National Assembly as provided by the Constitution. He has now reigned for some six years as the *de facto* sovereign of the country. His Government is in close and friendly relations with the Porte; and it is notorious that the Sultan, as Suzerain of Bulgaria, would be willing at any moment, and has been willing ever since the Prince's

accession, to recognize him formally as the legal successor of Prince Alexander of Battenberg.

Up to the present, however, the Sultan has delayed recognizing the Prince's election in deference to the wishes of the Czar. The Russian Government objects to the confirmation of the election on the ground that by the Treaty of Berlin the consent of all the signatories is essential to the choice of a Prince of Bulgaria, and that, for reasons which have never been openly stated, Prince Ferdinand is not a *persona grata* to the Court of St. Petersburg. The other Powers, though they are quite ready to recognize the Prince, do not consider themselves sufficiently interested in the matter to dispute the Russian contention. In consequence, the Prince remains unrecognized. The relations, therefore, between the Court and the diplomatic body at Sofia are of a very exceptional character. All official communications from foreign Powers are still addressed, not to the Prince personally, but to the Government of Bulgaria. This state of things is naturally displeasing to the Prince and to his *entourage;* but to the mass of the people the absence of recognition makes no practical difference. Indeed, the majority of Bulgarian politicians are agreed that the disadvantages of non-recognition are much more than compensated by the absence of a Russian Minister at the capital, and of Russian Consulars in all the large towns, as in their opinion these diplomatic agencies would infallibly become centres of disaffection and intrigue against the order of things at present established.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ERA OF TURKISH RULE.

One of the many questions which suggests itself to any one who has cause to make a study of Bulgaria is, what the reason may be why its people are so different from, and in many respects so superior to, the population of other Christian States which have also been held for centuries under the rule of the Crescent. I have no wish to dispute the many good and even grand qualities which differentiate the Turk from the mongrel races out of which the Ottoman Empire is composed. But I think even the most ardent admirer of the Turks will admit that they are singularly incompetent and inefficient as administrators. It is a well-known saying throughout the East, that the grass never grows where the hoof of the Turk's horse has trod; and this saying might not unfairly be called an epitome of the whole history of Turkey in Europe. The present prosperous and progressive condition of Bulgaria seems at first sight inconsistent with the alleged maladministration of the country under Turkish rule. It is obvious that the effects of some five centuries of enslavement cannot well have become obliterated in the course of a mere handful of years.

The explanation of this apparent anomaly is, I think, twofold. In the first place, the Bulgarians were a more

stubborn and sturdy race than the bulk of the nationalities which, after the fall of the Greek Empire, passed under the dominion of the Crescent. In the second place, the Bulgarians were never brought under the direct domination of Turkey to the same extent as many of their neighbours. There are few written records of the era of Turkish rule. But the general impression seems to be that, from the day when Bulgaria became a province of the Ottoman Empire in the reign of the Sultan Bayazet to the day when it was converted into an autonomous State by the Treaty of Berlin, the general character of the administration remained much the same. The so-called vilayet of the Danube, which included not only Bulgaria proper but the Dobrudscha on the left bank of the Danube, and part of Servia as far west as Nisch, was administered by a governor appointed directly by the Porte, who, as was the case with the Viceroys of Egypt, was the sole channel of official communication between the province and the Supreme Government of Constantinople. The governor possessed absolute autocratic power. No decision of the local courts, whether in civil or criminal cases, was valid till it had been submitted to, and sanctioned by, the representative of the Sultan. His authority, however, was limited to some slight extent by the existence of the Meglis, a sort of council of local notables, whose advice the governor was empowered to take, but not obliged to follow. The head governor resided at Rustschuk on the Danube. The other vilayets, such as Sofia, had local governors of their own, who exercised their authority subject to the orders of the Governor-in-Chief. These local governors had also Meglis of their own by whom they were supposed to be advised

on all matters of local interest. Each vilayet was divided into a number of districts, administered by officials called Muktar-Scherifs; and each village in every district was presided over by a Kaimakan, whose position much resembled that of an Egyptian Sheikh. In theory the Governor-in-Chief selected the local Governors; the local Governors appointed the Muktar-Scherifs in their several districts; and the sanction of the Muktar-Scherifs was essential for the nomination of the village Kaimakans, who were elected by their fellow-villagers. The extent, however, to which this theory was carried out in practice, depended mainly upon the personal character of the reigning Governor. Till quite recent times no official who was not a Mussulman was ever appointed to any Government post in Bulgaria. The only exception made to this rule was in the composition of the Meglis, where a certain number of Christians were allowed to sit as representatives of the various non-Mahommedan religious communities. The majority, however, in all the Meglis were always Mahommedans. The courts of law were presided over by Mussulman judges, and administered the law of Islam.

Thus Bulgaria was in theory ruled on a highly centralized system, in virtue of which the *sic volo sic jubeo* policy of the Porte was carried out all over the province through the agency of the Governor-in-Chief. In Turkey, however, even more than elsewhere, there is a wide difference between theory and fact. Bulgaria was not a favourite residence with the Turkish officials. Then, as now, it was, at any rate during the long winter months, a bleak, cheerless country, remote in actual distance from Stamboul, and still more remote in respect of means of

communication. The population consisted almost exclusively of illiterate and uncouth peasants, who earned little more than was required for their own sustenance, and out of whose pockets there was very little to be got even by the most exacting of Pashas. In consequence of this state of things, the great majority of the officials were not Turks, but Bulgarians, who had become converts to Islam; and, in the general relations of life, not affected by matters of creed, these officials were, as a rule, on friendly terms with their Christian fellow-kinsmen.

Moreover, to do the Turks justice, they are not given to interfere unnecessarily in small matters. The Turk is at once too proud and too indolent to ever make an efficient taskmaster. The chief, if not the sole, duty of the Turkish administration in Bulgaria was to collect the revenue required by the Porte. In order to discharge this duty with as little trouble as possible, the administration used to farm out the taxes; the post of receiver being conferred, without any regard to religious considerations, upon the contractor who was willing to pay the highest price for his appointment. The farmers of the taxes were generally Bulgarians, who from their knowledge of the language, habits, and circumstances of their fellow-countrymen, were able to squeeze more money out of the tax-payers than the Turks could well have done themselves. The result was that the collection of taxes, which in all Eastern countries forms the chief point of contact between the Government and its subjects, was left in Bulgaria almost entirely in the hands of native middle-men. These middle-men cheated and overtaxed their fellow-countrymen just as they cheated and underpaid the Government by whom they were employed. Still the oppression of

men of your own race and faith is never quite the same thing to the person oppressed as the tyranny of a stranger and an alien.

I do not gather that even in the worst of times the peasantry were cruelly over-taxed. Bulgaria is not a country like Egypt, where, given a good Nile, the crops are so rich as to make the poorest fellah worth robbing. By hard work and extreme thrift the Bulgarian peasants contrived to earn a living. They had no motive to do more. What little they saved after they had fed and housed themselves was hoarded. Large estates were almost unknown. The peasant had his two or three acres to till; and on their produce he lived in comparative comfort, secured from oppression by his own real or apparent lack of means. When the Russian troops entered Bulgaria as liberators, the common soldiers were astonished to find that the peasants they had come to deliver from Ottoman tyranny were apparently far better off than the ordinary Muscovite Moujik. Thus the misgovernment to which Bulgaria was subjected at the hands of Turkey did not produce quite as evil effects as might have been expected to result from a vicious system of administration. As an instance of how the system worked, I may repeat a story told me by one of the most eminent of Bulgarian statesmen as coming within his own experience. Some thirty years ago there was a small tradesman at Gabrovo who carried on the business of a tanner, and had laid by a little money. After the fashion of his countrymen, he sent his son to Paris to learn how business was carried on in more civilized countries. After a few years the lad returned home, having acquired knowledge of various new processes in the art of tanning,

and persuaded his father to purchase modern machinery and start a tannery after the French model. The scheme was carried out; the factory went on swimmingly, and threatened to drive local competition out of the field. Within a few weeks, however, of the new works being opened the premises were burnt down by Mussulmen in the tannery trade. The tanner was ruined, but had no possibility of obtaining redress. He knew perfectly well who had committed the offence; but the offenders were Mussulmen, and it was idle for him, being himself a Christian, to sue them before a Mussulman tribunal. In consequence he gave up the business and abandoned all idea of introducing improvements into his own trade.

Notwithstanding the baleful influence of Mahommedan ascendency, the antipathies between the followers of the Crescent and the Cross seem to me to have been far less keen and embittered in Bulgaria than in most other parts of the Ottoman Empire. At all periods in their history the Bulgarians took their religion less fanatically than other Sclavonic nations. They held rigidly to their own creed and their own ritual, but in the main they lived on good terms with their fellow-citizens who had accepted the religion of the Prophet. I am assured, though this estimate must necessarily be of a very problematical character, that the Mussulman population in Bulgaria never at any time exceeded one-tenth of the whole, and that at the present moment the proportion of Christians to Mahommedans is as fifty to one. Ever since Bulgaria became independent the Mahommedan exodus has been going on steadily. The Tomaks, as the Bulgarians who became converts to Islam after the Turkish conquest are called, have not been oppressed

in any way, except during the brief era which followed the War of Independence. In the great majority of instances the Tomaks have nothing to complain of in respect to their treatment by their Christian neighbours. In common with all other Bulgarians, they have prospered with the general development of the national prosperity. Now that the Cross has supplanted the Crescent, the old ascendency of the Tomaks as a dominant caste has disappeared, and they find it difficult to brook being equals where formerly they were superiors. But the main cause of the Tomak exodus is of a religious kind. There is no creed which takes so firm a hold upon the minds of converts as that of the Prophet, and the Tomaks are devout beyond the measure of ordinary Mussulmen. The Mollahs from the Turkish provinces who visit the Mussulman villages, especially during Ramadan, never lose an opportunity of exhorting their co-religionists to quit a country where the Giaour is supreme, where the true faith is not held in respect, and where, in consequence, Allah will not listen to the prayers of those who, of free choice, live and die amidst unbelievers. Appeals of this kind always come home to true sons of Islam ; and every year Tomak after Tomak sells his farms, often at a ruinous sacrifice, and leaves the country of his birth in order to reside once more amongst the people of his own faith.

This rapid decrease in the Mahommedan population is a subject of deep regret to the Bulgarian authorities. The north-east corner of the country, the triangle contained between the Danube, the Black Sea, and the northern slopes of the Balkans, is almost exclusively occupied by Tomaks. Every inducement in the way of remission of taxes and of exemption from military

service has been held out to keep the Tomaks from deserting their homes. But so far all these inducements have failed to overcome the half-social, half-fanatical influences which render a land where the Giaour holds sway no fit dwelling-place for a true follower of Islam.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PEASANT STATE.

CHAPTER V.

THE LAND TENURE.

I HAVE endeavoured in the foregoing chapters to explain the general course of events which preceded the conversion of Bulgaria into an independent State. I have now to deal with its present position. The population of the country nowadays is, in round numbers, three and a half millions. Notwithstanding the large exodus of the Moslem Bulgarians, and the great mortality among infants, due to the absence of midwives, to bad sanitary arrangements, and to the fact of the mothers going back to work in the fields almost immediately after their confinement, the population increases annually by about two hundred thousand. The peasants, as a rule, marry soon after they come of age. Large families are very common, and a household in which there are only four or five children is the exception. The material conditions of life have improved greatly—and notably amidst the poorer classes—since the declaration of independence; and if the present rate of increase continues, it is calculated that the population will be doubled in the course of the next decade.

Of the existing population five-sevenths, or two and a

half millions, are engaged in agricultural pursuits, and the overwhelming majority are small landed proprietors. The proportion of labourers, who work for wages on other men's lands, is extremely limited. At harvest time, a certain number of foreigners, chiefly Macedonians, come into Bulgaria to seek employment; and the poorer peasant farmers of the country, when their own crops are gathered in, are ready to work for wages on the lands of their wealthier neighbours. But it may safely be asserted that, throughout the rural districts, there is no important section of the community depending for its means of livelihood on any other source of income than the produce of its own lands. There is as yet no *cadastre* in Bulgaria, though one is shortly to be undertaken. Nor is there, so far, any very satisfactory system of agricultural statistics. It is not, therefore, easy to say what are the average holdings of the present proprietors. According to the estimate of residents well acquainted with the country, the average is about six acres, taken all round, though in many instances the holdings are very small, only amounting to a single acre or even less. According to the law, which is still mainly based upon the old Turkish legislation, the father of a family has only a qualified liberty of testamentary disposal. If he has only one child, he is obliged to leave that child not less than one-half his property; if he has two or more children, he can only alienate one-third; and, in default of children, his other relatives, including his parents, if still living at the time of his death, have a legal claim to a certain share in his estate. Of course, this system tends to promote the indefinite subdivision of landed property, though, in the case of very small farms, this tendency is modified by voluntary arrangements

between the different heirs to the property, in virtue of which one of them is allowed to keep the farm for himself in consideration of his buying out the other claimants, either by paying cash down, or by assigning them a charge on the profits of the farm. There are obvious disadvantages to the State in this continued multiplication of small farms; and there has been some talk of legislation, with the view of checking the further subdivision of estates. The passion, however, for owning land, and the preference for agricultural labour, are so universal amidst the people, that, no matter what legislation may attempt, Bulgaria, for many generations to come, will remain a land of small proprietors.

The Bulgarians hold their land on a system derived from the days of the Ottoman dominion. In Turkey, as in all Oriental countries, the Sultan is theoretically the absolute owner of all the land, over which he rules by the grace of Allah. In practice, he is a sort of ground landlord, whose tenants, subject to certain specified conditions, have a perpetual lease, which descends as a matter of law to their heirs. In Bulgaria the condition of tenure was that the lessees of the land had to pay one-tenth of the gross produce of their farms to the tax-collectors of the Government. In the event of default of payment of the tithe, or of the lands being left uncultivated for three consecutive years, or of the owner dying without legal heirs, the land reverted to the State. In the old days, this system paved the way for a great amount of abuse. Still in this, as in other matters, the Turks adhered loyally to any contract into which they had entered; and I gather that even under Mahommedan rule the Bulgarian peasantry had practically a good title to their lands.

When Bulgaria became independent, the State stepped into the place of the Sultan ; and the old system of land tenure has not been materially modified. Taxation by tithes is, however, at the best, a very costly, cumbrous, and unsatisfactory arrangement. In Turkish days the tithe was mainly paid in kind ; during the last few years, various, more or less successful, attempts have been made to substitute payment in cash for payment in kind. But these reforms have not made so much progress as might have been expected. Owing to the intense conservatism, characteristic of peasant communities, and to their profound distrust of any innovation, even if it can be shown to be conducive to their own advantage, payment in cash is viewed with scanty favour by the mass of the population. The tithe system tends to check improvement in agriculture or the employment of money in the development of the land. The farmer, as it is, pays one-tenth of his gross produce. If he raises crops valued at ten pounds, according to the market rates, he pays one pound as a tax to the treasury. But if he spends twenty pounds on manure or irrigation, and thereby raises the produce of his land to twenty pounds, he has to pay two pounds in the shape of taxes, without any deduction being made for the capital he has invested in the permanent improvement of his lands. Thus the action of the tithe system actually augments the natural reluctance of an ignorant and thrifty community of peasant proprietors to spend money on improvements. In consequence, the Government are anxious to do away with the present mode of estimating the land-tax in proportion to the produce of each particular year, and to substitute for it a fixed rental, payable in coin, irrespective of the rise and

fall in the amount of the year's production. In other words, if the proposed changes should be carried out, the tenant will become a freehold owner, subject only to the payment of a yearly land-tax to the State, in virtue of a perpetual settlement.

The communes hold their lands, which are not of very large extent, under a different tenure. Each commune owns a certain amount of pasture land and woodland, which is held in perpetuity, and for which no rent is paid either in cash or kind. Every member of the commune has the right of grazing his cattle on the parish pasture-grounds, and of cutting fuel from the parish woods. As the population increases, and as land becomes more valuable, the commune tenure will probably have to be altered. For the present, the system works fairly well, and is popular with the country.

The condition of the peasantry has also been improved by the establishment of the *Caisses Agricoles*, which owe their origin to Turkish rule, and which have been largely developed under the recent administration. When poor Midhat Pasha—a sort of Oriental Hamlet, born in an evil hour for himself, to try and set right a world that was out of joint — lived at Rustschuk, as Governor-General of the vilayet of the Danube, one of his many measures of reform was the establishment in Bulgaria of Mutual Assurance Associations for the development of local industries. The land-owners in each district were compelled to contribute a certain sum, calculated in proportion to the amount of the tithe at which they were assessed, into a common fund. This fund was placed under the control of a certain number of the leading inhabitants of each locality, who were partly elected and

partly nominated by the administration. The funds so raised were employed in making advances to the farmers within the district, who required advances for the improvement of their lands. The advances were made on personal security. As the administrators had to deal with funds to which they themselves were large subscribers, and as they were necessarily well acquainted with the pecuniary position of any borrowers who applied for advances, there was little risk of the funds of the Caisses being imprudently invested. When Bulgaria was declared independent, the native Government found these institutions in working order, and has since largely increased their number. There are now not far from a hundred of these Caisses to be found in the country, possessing an aggregate capital of £600,000, and having power to borrow loans from the National Bank. None of these institutions have ever actually failed to meet their liabilities, though naturally enough several of them have invested portions of their funds unwisely, have made bad debts, and have thereby diminished their available resources. Still, on the whole, they have done good work, they have enabled farmers in many instances to tide over bad times without resorting to the native usurers, who charge exorbitant rates of interest, and they have acquired the confidence of the general public. As a proof of this, I may mention that the Sobranje has recently passed a law authorizing the guardians of children under age to invest the trust funds at their disposal in the Caisses Agricoles.

There is talk, too, of establishing a *Crédit Foncier*. The law of mortgage in Bulgaria is based on the French system, which is about as good a one as exists anywhere. A mortgage is not binding, as against third parties, unless

it has been formally registered by the lender. Registers of all mortgages are kept in the districts wherein the lands mortgaged are situated, and are accessible to any one who wishes to purchase land ; there is, therefore, no difficulty in ascertaining whether any property offered for sale or mortgage is free of any previous lien, or if not, to what extent it is indebted. I should fancy, however, the extreme smallness of the average holdings would render it difficult for any large institution to carry on a profitable trade in advancing money on the security of landed estate in Bulgaria. The absence of any *cadastre* and of any central registry office are also difficulties in the way of a *Crédit Foncier.* Moreover, the Bulgarian peasantry are too thrifty and too penurious to mortgage their holdings except under extreme pressure. It is only in the towns that the local banks are able to do any large business as money-lenders upon mortgage.

Each village is administered by a Mayor, assisted by a council of two or more members, in proportion to the population. The Mayor and the Councillors are elected by the direct suffrage of their fellow-villagers, and hold office for three years. In Bulgaria, as in most countries composed of peasant proprietors, there is a standing prejudice against centralization, and a strong preference for local self-government ; this sentiment manifests itself constantly in the Parliament, which, in the main, is a Chamber of peasant land-owners.

Take it altogether, I should say the lot of the Bulgarian peasantry was a happy one. They live very roughly, very thriftily, and, one might almost say, very sordidly ; but they have sufficient to eat, they are warmly, if coarsely, clad, and they enjoy generally a certain amount of rude

comfort. They work hard, but they work for themselves, and they are now, even more than in the old days, free to live out their own lives after their own fashion. Poverty, in our sense of the word, does not exist. In the towns there are individual cases of destitution owing to drink and misconduct ; but these cases are few and insignificant. There is, as yet, no need to make any public provision for the relief of the poor ; there is no question of the conflicting interests of workmen and employers ; strikes and trades unions are alike unknown. For all these things the Bulgarians have ground to thank the causes which have made them what they are, a people of peasants.

CHAPTER VI.

ASPECT OF THE PEOPLE.

In the course of my life, it has been my lot to reside in many out-of-the-way places. But I know of few where I have felt so much cut off from the outer world as in the city of Sofia. It is a bright town, with most of the appliances of civilization. The shop windows display all the articles, and nothing but the articles, one is familiar with in Western cities. The place, people, dresses bear to Western eyes a home-like aspect. Indeed, I think, if I were placed suddenly in the centre of Sofia, not knowing where I was, I should guess that I was in one of the commonplace modern cities of the German Fatherland, in which every travelled Englishman feels that, though he is not at home, he is not far from home. Yet, the longer I stayed at Sofia, the stronger the impression grew upon me that I was a stranger in a strange land.

I think this impression is due partly to the fact that the inscriptions over the shops, the names of the streets, the placards on the walls, and the notices in the windows convey absolutely no meaning to the ordinary Western mind. The letters employed seem to have a sort of remote kinship to the Greek alphabet, but to any one not conversant with Sclav languages, the letters look as if jumbled up in

inextricable confusion, like the figures of a child's map puzzle thrown, as printers say, into "pie." Then, too, the ordinary smattering of foreign tongues, by possession of which our countrymen contrive to make themselves more or less understood in most parts of the world, is here well-nigh useless. If you want to ask your way about the town from ninety-nine out of a hundred of the people you meet in the streets, you may as well address them in Chinese as in English, French, German, or Italian. The great mass of the people speak no language except their own. The officials and the men of education can commonly understand French, but they rarely speak it either readily or fluently. Some dozen words of Russian, which, out of the very few that I ever knew, have stuck somehow in my memory, proved singularly useful to me here. At the hotels and cafés there is a sprinkling of waiters who are either Germans by birth or who can understand German when spoken. But kavasses, dragomans, *valets de place*, and all the class of people who serve as guides and interpreters to strangers in other Capitals, are here an unknown race.

So far, the Bulgarians have had but little intercourse with strangers and foreigners ; they have had, therefore, no great necessity for the use of any foreign language. The older generation, indeed, generally picked up enough of Turkish to make themselves intelligible, but the generation which has grown up since the Russo-Turkish War has had little need for a knowledge which was essential to their parents. In Sofia there are colonies of Greeks, Austrians, and Jews, who reside mostly in different quarters of the town. But in as far as language and looks are concerned, these colonies have become more or less fused in the

ordinary Bulgarian mould. English tourists are extremely rare. At the time I was there, the whole English community—putting aside the members of our Agency and Consulate—consisted of three persons, of which trinity I myself formed one. There are a few Frenchmen resident in Sofia, who are chiefly employed in the service of the palace. There are also a considerable number of Germans, who earn their living as waiters or skilled artisans. Still, taking everything into account, the foreign element in Sofia is extremely small in proportion to the importance and size of the city. Outside the capital this proportion is infinitely smaller. Thus the more a stranger sees of Bulgaria, the more the feeling grows upon him that he is dwelling amongst a very distinct and homogeneous race, with whom he has but little in common. Even foreigners, who have resided here for years, do not seem to grow intimate with the people amongst whom their lives are spent. There is, I think, a certain amount of popular prejudice against all foreigners, though, judging from my own experience, strangers have absolutely no cause to complain of any lack of friendly courtesy. The truth is that the Bulgarians are a self-contained, undemonstrative race, who have no particular wish to go outside their own circle of home ideas, home interests, and home habits.

Thus the stranger in Bulgaria is necessarily isolated, and the sense of isolation is increased by the fact that the whole outward aspect of the towns, and especially of Sofia, is in all material respects so essentially Western and not Eastern. One seems here to be somehow in the West, and yet not of it. There is so little in the look of things to recall the fact that a few years ago this was a Turkish country. It is but seldom, except in the

northern districts, that you meet with fez or turban of any kind. Everywhere, amidst men and women alike, the dull, sombre, monotone garb of the West is the all but universal costume. It is only on market days, when the peasants troop into the towns from the country, that you can realize the fact that the East, after all, lies very close at hand. The long, heavily laden waggons, formed of a pole with planks on either side and drawn by oxen or buffaloes, which come creaking and jolting through the streets, are of the East Eastern. The peasants, bearing goads in their hands, clad in sheepskins, with their legs swathed round with woollen cloth, tied with strings round their calves and ankles, tramp stolidly along with the look of apathy and indifference to their surroundings which characterizes the Oriental. The peasant women, too, display the love of gaudy colours which is innate under the sunlight of Eastern climes. One and all of them wear a kind of embroidered jacket of many hues, which, unfettered by stays or belts, hangs down loosely to their knees. Underneath they display a flannel petticoat, embroidered with what I believe are called insertions; and under this again you catch sight of a more or less white petticoat, reaching to the ankles of the sandled feet. Their heads are covered with a turban bound in folds round the hair, and to it there are attached two long tails floating down the back. The turbans are mostly white, but are often, like Joseph's coat, of many colours. Amidst the younger women the hair is not unfrequently decked out as in the East with strings of coin. Old and young alike have no veils to their faces, and I must add that, in most cases, the Bulgarian women look as if they had washed their faces—a custom which is by no means characteristic of

Oriental womankind. Men and women tramp, or rather shuffle, along together—the former in front, the latter behind, but they seldom seem to speak to each other or to desire any closer companionship. The women carry most of the household burdens, the men walk unloaded; this, too, is Oriental. Smoking is not common amongst the men, and drunkenness in public seems almost unknown. Indeed, amongst the things which struck me most in Bulgaria were the extreme sobriety and quietness of the native population. Street quarrels, rows, shouts, and cries are of rare occurrence; and the very children, who play tip-cat all day long in the side streets, play for the most part in silence. Beauty, judged at any rate by a Western standard, is not characteristic of the ordinary Bulgarians. Their complexion is muddy, their features are coarse and ill-formed, and the Tartar element in their physiognomy is too predominant. But at the same time they are a singularly strong-built, powerful race. Both men and women are broad-shouldered, wide-chested, and full-legged. Perhaps when you have said that they have the look which the Scotch call "dour," you have said as much as can fairly be urged against their possession of physical charms.

During my stay in Bulgaria I was very often reminded of the Transvaal. The two countries have much in common; they are both peasant States, ruled by peasant Ministers, who legislate in accordance with the will of a peasant assembly. In some important respects the conditions of the two countries are fundamentally different. The Boers are, as a body, large landowners, who constitute the dominant race amidst a semi-savage population. In the Transvaal the Kaffirs perform the manual labour which their Dutch masters are unable or unwilling to do for

themselves. The trade, industry, and development of the country are left in the hands of foreigners. No amount of money would induce a Boer to earn wages as a labourer, or to work in the fields except as a "boss," ordering about black workmen. Grazing, hunting, and driving a team are pretty well the only occupations the Boers will consent to follow. In all the above respects the Bulgarians are the exact opposite of the Transvaal farmers. They are small landowners, who till their own fields by their own manual labour. If the land is not large or fertile enough to support the whole family, the members who are not wanted on the farm go to the towns and get employment there as shopmen or artisans, till they can save enough to buy a field for themselves. The retail trade and industry of the State are mainly in native hands, and are daily becoming more so. Unlike the Transvaal, which owes its prosperity to enterprises originated, worked, and owned by foreigners, Bulgaria owes her fortune to the almost unassisted industry of her own people. If ever the popular belief should be realized, according to which immense mineral wealth exists in the remote mountain districts, a second Johannesburg may possibly come into existence amidst the Balkan ranges; but in any case it will be a Bulgarian, and not an English, Johannesburg. On the other hand, the Bulgars, who have been for centuries subject to the rule of a race alien to their own in nationality and creed, do not and cannot possess the rugged independence of the Boers. Apart, however, from the differences due to the influence of their respective histories and their respective surroundings, the Bulgars and Boers have many points of resemblance. Both States are essentially peasant communities; and the people of both countries have the merits and

demerits common to the peasant type. When I visited the Transvaal I found an extreme difficulty in reconciling the conflicting accounts about the Boer character, which were given me by old residents, equally well informed, and, to all appearance, equally truthful. On the one hand, I was assured that the Boers were sordid in their habits, ignorant and untruthful, corrupt and unprincipled, and altogether unfit for independence. On the other hand, I was told that the Boers were a homely, simple-minded, law-abiding, and hard-working people, honest in their dealings, anxious to keep their word, though keen-witted about their own affairs, and perfectly competent to govern themselves. My personal observation soon led me to the conclusion that the Boers were neither as good nor as bad as they were described respectively by friendly and unfriendly critics; but that, on the whole, the favourable version came nearer to the truth than the unfavourable one. I suspect, myself, a similar investigation would lead to a similar conclusion as to the two contradictory estimates of the Bulgar character you hear constantly from foreign residents, whose experience gives them some right to express an opinion on the subject. I was frequently told that the Bulgars were a bad lot; that they were greedy, grasping, and ungrateful; that they had no self-respect, no sense of honour. I have no doubt there is an element of truth in the above description. The Bulgars have only just regained their liberty after a servitude of centuries. I have already expressed my opinion that Turkish rule in Bulgaria was by no means so cruel or so oppressive as it is represented to have been by ardent partisans of Sclav proclivities. Still, after making every possible allowance, the rule of Turkey in Bulgaria was an autocratic despotism

exercised by masters alien from their subjects in race, language, and religion. Slavery is slavery all the world over ; and till within recent years the Bulgars were slaves, who only enjoyed a modicum of freedom, thanks to the remoteness of their country, the absence of individual wealth, and the contemptuous indifference of their Moslem lords and masters. The marvel is, given these conditions, that they have retained so much of the virtues of freemen, not that they should have imbibed a few of the vices of slavery. Servility, dishonesty, dissimulation, disregard of truth, and absence of self-respect are failings necessarily generated by slavery. I am quite prepared to admit that the present generation of Bulgarians have not lost all the characteristics inherited from their forefathers. There is not a Bulgarian, over the age of eighteen, who was not born under Turkish rule ; and till a year or two ago, there was not a child at school who could not remember the day when the Turk was master in the country. Moreover, the indictments against the Bulgarian character, to which I have made reference, are at best generalizations from individual experiences. Whenever you ask for some definite proof that the Bulgarians are all dishonest and untruthful, you are told of some isolated instances of fraud and deceit which have come within the knowledge of your informants. These instances may or may not be fairly stated, but, in any case, they are not sufficient to justify any general conclusion as to the character of a whole nation. As against these hasty denunciations, it may be well to quote the testimony of three witnesses, who enjoyed considerable opportunities of studying the Bulgarian people. Dr. Constantine Jirsech, who, some years ago, published a very impartial work on Bulgaria in German, gives it as his

opinion that "the Bulgarian is sober in every respect, "careful in his expenditure, and hard-working. The energy "he displays as a cultivator and an artisan is inexhaustible. "Under the exterior of the peasant, cunning and suspicious "in accordance with peasant nature, the common Bulgar "conceals a shrewd and observant mind. Being both docile "and conscientious, whether as scholar, soldier, artisan, or "trader, he identifies himself completely with the duties he "has undertaken to perform. His whole mode of life is "simple and frugal." Again, Prince Joseph of Battenburg, the younger brother of the late Prince Alexander, states that "the people of Bulgaria are sober, laborious, and persevering. They possess all the qualities which, when Bulgaria has developed her productive forces, must enable her some day or other to play the leading part with the Balkan Peninsula. Bulgaria is a rich, fertile, happy country, a country with a future." This opinion, I may say, was expressed by Prince Joseph long after his brother's connection with the Principality had come to an untimely end. Similar testimony is borne by a recent French traveller, Captain Lamouske: "The dominant features in the Bulgarian character are a certain seriousness and a sense of what is practical. As a rule the Bulgarian is cold, reserved, and silent. As a rule, too, he leads a moral life, is hard-working and economical."

I may confirm to some extent these testimonies to the Bulgarian character by statements which were made to me in the course of casual conversation by foreign residents, who have had long personal experience of the country and its people. The managing director of one of the leading railways assured me that Bulgaria was the only place he had ever known where you could leave money about your

offices or rooms with perfect safety, even if the doors were open—a statement which, on a small scale, I could corroborate from my own observation. The manager of a foreign bank in Bulgaria remarked to me that in all his experience as a banker in many parts of the world, he had never known bank customers who repaid loans made to them so honestly as the Bulgarian peasant farmers. An English gentleman, who has resided in Bulgaria and owned land there for the greater part of a long life, gave me as the result of his experience that, if you wanted work done in Bulgaria, you got it done more quickly and more cheaply if you engaged Bulgarian workmen by the day, than if you contracted for the job by piecework. It would be absurd to say that these various statements are conclusive proofs of the general honesty of the Bulgarians. But they go some way to show that, to say the least, they are not less honest than their neighbours.

It should be borne in mind that the persons from whom an ordinary traveller derives most of his information in Bulgaria are generally people connected in some way or other with the diplomatic service. All this class of informants, no matter what their nationality, are unconsciously biased by their partiality for the Turks. I do not wonder at this partiality. I suspect that in their place I should entertain much the same sentiment. Whatever the defects of the "unspeakable Turk" may be as a master, it is difficult to overrate his merits as an acquaintance. He is an infinitely more satisfactory personage to deal with than the average Levantine, or Sclav, or Greek. He has a value for truth which renders him unwilling, to say the least, to tell a lie without a motive; he has a sense of self-respect which makes him dislike being detected in double dealings,

even if it is not strong enough to ensure his uprightness; he is polished in manner, dignified, and courteous. In fact, to put the matter briefly, the Turk is the gentleman of Eastern Europe; and therefore all diplomatists who have to do with the East are prejudiced in his favour, and are disposed to side with him as against the native races which have revolted, or are endeavouring to revolt, against his rule.

It happens, too, that from a variety of reasons the progress of Bulgaria is viewed with extreme jealousy, not only by Russia, but by Greece and Servia. In consequence, Russians, Greeks, and Serbs, who come into much closer contact with the West than the Bulgars, are only too glad to join in any outcry against the Piedmont of the Balkans. The Bulgarians are not, I admit freely, an engaging or a particularly attractive people; they have no literature, no artistic tastes, no great intellectual culture, and no dramatic qualities. They are simply a race of peasants with all a peasant's meannesses and prejudices, but also with all the peasant's virtues of industry and frugality. I remember many years ago, when travelling in the Western States of America, that, as we crossed the prairies of Illinois in the tram, there was an old Irishwoman seated in the corner of the car I occupied. Somebody in the car made a disparaging remark about the dreary monotony of the endless plains over which we were passing. The old woman seemed to take the comment as an insult to the country, and, pointing to the homesteads rising out of the prairie, remarked rather to herself than to anybody else, "Sure and it is a blessed country; I think God made it for the poor." And as I travelled through Bulgaria the memory of this incident often came back to my mind, and I thought that this, too, was a blessed country, made by God for the peasant.

CHAPTER VII.

VILLAGE LIFE.

THE more I saw of Bulgaria the more I came to the conclusion that it was a lucky accident which caused Sofia to be selected as the seat of the Government, the head-quarters from which the reorganization of the country was to be initiated and conducted. If the Principality is ever to play an independent part in history, it must be in virtue of its distinctive Bulgarian character; and this character is more strongly marked and less diluted by foreign elements in the district surrounding Sofia than in any other portion of the State. In the capital and its vicinity the Tomak population is small in number and almost confined to the towns. The inland position of Sofia and its remoteness from the sea-coast prevent it from being subjected to any of the cosmopolitan influences which more or less affect all seaboard districts. Moreover, from the height of the plateau which constitutes the province of Sofia, its inhabitants are mountaineers as compared with the people of the fertile, low, southern plains, while their lives are passed in a far colder climate than that of Eastern Roumelia. Under these conditions the Sofiote Bulgarians display the intense conservatism of habit which marks all races whose existence is a lifelong struggle against a cold though

bracing climate, against a hard though not ungrateful soil, and against a variety of economic causes which render freedom from the necessity for constant toil almost as rare as absolute destitution. In short, the characteristics which distinguish the Bulgarians as a race are to be found more strongly developed in the inhabitants of the northern plateaus.

If Bulgaria is allowed to work out her own development, the organization of the State must be based upon the peculiar economic conditions which, as I have endeavoured to show, distinguish it from almost all other communities; and the atmosphere, moral as well as material, of the country round Sofia is more favourable to development on these lines than that of which Philippopolis is the centre. Making allowance for a difference of site, one Bulgarian village is the very counterpart of every other. You have only to drive in any direction from Sofia to find village after village, generally buried in the valleys at the foot of the hills, which are so like each other that no one not a native would find it easy to distinguish them. One of the favourite drives from the capital is that to the hamlet of Panscherevow, which lies some dozen miles south of Sofia, on the slopes of the mountain range of which Vitosch is the highest point, and which stands on the banks of the river Ishka. On leaving Sofia you drive for about six miles along the high-road to Constantinople, the one central artery which traverses Bulgaria from the Servian frontier at Zaribrod to the Turkish frontier at Mustapha Pasha. I should fancy, myself, that the road must have been originally constructed by the Romans—it runs so pitilessly straight and is so obviously the work of a road-building race. Even in the Turkish

days this road was kept in comparatively good repair, as it formed the military route between Stamboul and Belgrade. The construction of the railroad has to some extent diminished its importance, but it is still the chief means of communication between the various towns which lie along its course. Neither expense nor trouble are spared in building new bridges, keeping the roadway in good order, and digging trenches along the sides so as to carry off the water, which formerly flooded the road whenever the mountain streams poured down the hillside in torrents after the snow had melted in the uplands.

The plain, through which the road runs, is, as a rule, cultivated. It is hard to say exactly where the tilled fields end and where the open pasture-land begins, as there are no hedgerows or landmarks of any kind between one field and another. Here, as elsewhere, I was puzzled to understand where the labourers lived, whose daily toil brought and kept such a wide area of land under cultivation. Dotted over the plain, at long distances apart, you could see the whitewashed belfries which denote the neighbourhood of a village; but outside the villages, neither farmhouses nor cottages were to be seen anywhere. We did not pass or catch sight of, in the half-dozen miles we traversed along the high-road, a single dwelling of any kind, with the exception of a roadside tavern. As soon as we left the high-road, our way lay along a rough field track, over which it was difficult for any vehicle more complicated in its structure than a Bulgarian cart to make progress. In rainy weather, or when the snow lies upon the ground, these country roads must be almost impassable, and, in consequence, the villages to which they lead must

be practically inaccessible. Deep ruts and big boulders have to be traversed at frequent intervals; and no horses, less wiry or sure-footed than those of the country, could well draw a carriage up the almost precipitous ascents by which the track crosses one hillock after another. The only way to make the ascent is to lash the horses into a mad gallop at the foot of every hill, and even then they are not always equal to the effort. Carriage accidents in this part of the country are of frequent occurrence, and would be still more frequent if, when the carriage begins to roll backwards owing to the inability of the horses to crest the hill, its downward course was not commonly stopped by striking against some of the huge stones which lie embedded in the field track. In summer time, however, Panscherevow is a favourite resort for the townsfolk of Sofia, and forms a sort of Sofiote Richmond. The condition of the road leading to this suburban village gives you a fair idea of what must be the character of the country cross-roads in more remote districts, where pleasure traffic is utterly unknown.

The village comprises some two or three hundred inhabitants, and has, if I counted correctly, about thirty dwelling-houses. Most of these cottages are surrounded by a low wall, made in most cases of loose stones welded together with mud, but in some cases the walls are replaced by wooden palings. All the houses have white-washed walls, and are covered with sloping, red-tiled roofs. The walls are built either of stone, mixed up with rubble, or of hard-baked mud. The eaves of the roofs stretch downwards over the walls and form a sort of rough verandah, whose shade must be welcome during the great summer heats, and whose shelter serves as some sort of

protection against the bitter winter winds. At the same time, these eaves must obscure the dim light which comes into the dwelling-rooms through the narrow, iron-barred windows. Every house almost is one-storied, and built flush with the ground on which it stands. Inside the space formed by the walls surrounding the cottages there are wooden sheds and stables, and plots of open ground, half waste, half kitchen garden. Most of the enclosures have trees growing in them, often trees of respectable size and considerable age. Timber, at all deserving of the name, is a thing very rarely met with in this part of the country outside the villages, as, under Turkish rule, all the trees were cut down for fuel. It was not, perhaps, the fault of the Turks that the country is thus denuded of foliage. In a rigorous climate, with its long, bitter winter, fuel is an absolute necessity of existence; and, till the coal mines had been opened up, the only fuel available was the timber of the plains and hillsides. The complaint against the Turks is not that they cut the trees down, but that, with characteristic Turkish want of foresight, they failed to make any provision for the future by planting new trees to replace the ones cut down. The Government are making great efforts to raise new plantations, not so much for the supply of fuel as with the view of providing a more constant succession of rains. As it is, Bulgarian agriculture suffers greatly from the uncertainty and irregularity of the showers needed to refresh the soil during the dry season.

Within the enclosures, pigs, fowls, and ducks strut about round the cottages, and seem as much at home there as the human occupants. The walls with which the cottages are hemmed in, and whose construction and

maintenance in good repair must cost a great deal of labour, are not only useful for the purpose of keeping the live stock within a ring fence, but they also suit the ideas and tastes of the Bulgarian peasant. According to peasant notions, the women of the household ought to remain within the precincts of their homes when their services are not required in the fields. If you meet a party of peasants going to market you will notice that, if there is room in the carts for anything beyond the freight, the men ride in the cart, the women trudge behind on foot, carrying on their shoulders the goods which they are taking to market, and which, if the men would consent to walk, might be carried in the carts. Nothing can be plainer than the lives led, during the greater portion of the year, by both men and women. They are up by daybreak, and work in the fields till after sunset. It seems intrinsically improbable that, as the country grows more prosperous, the peasants should be content with their present existence; and I was told, whilst travelling in the richer districts, that, of late years, there had been a considerable increase in the demand for meat and poultry on the part of peasants who had formerly been content to live on bread and garlic.

The fact of the cottages being more or less hidden behind walls renders it difficult to look inside the houses. The Bulgarians, too, do not like strangers to come within their dwellings. But the houses in the one narrow, winding street which runs through the village, face the roadway, and, as their doors generally stand open, you can form, by peeping in as you pass, a fair impression of what a Bulgarian peasant's cottage is in reality. The floors are of mud; the kitchen fronting the street is also the living-room.

Behind there is a sleeping-room, with a bedstead in it for the head of the house, while the sons and daughters sleep upon mats stretched on the floor. The furniture consists of wooden tables, benches, and chests. The crockery and household utensils of every sort seem of the commonest and coarsest kind. I should doubt if there is a single house in the whole village in which any English labourer or artisan, earning good wages, would not deem it a hardship to be obliged to live in. At the same time, there was no single dwelling which, given the habits and customs of the country, could be fairly described as unfit for human habitation. A similar remark applies to the dress of the villagers. The day on which I visited Panscherevow happened to be a Sunday. In Bulgaria, though work is done in the fields on Sunday to some extent, the day is more or less of a holiday, and there are more people to be found in the villages than would be seen there on an ordinary week-day. Possibly, on a Sunday, a native might detect some little extra care or adornment in the dress of the peasants, but to a stranger the difference in attire between work-days and holidays is utterly imperceptible. The men had certainly made no change in their shaggy sheepskins and their woollen leggings. The women's stiff skirts and flannel petticoats may have displayed a trifle more embroidery than usual, and the white linen skull-caps, with their pendent tails, were obviously fresh from the wash-tub. In most cases, however, the dress of men, women, and children alike was frayed, soiled, and tattered. The clothing was warm and stout enough to keep out the cold, but it was generally so old and so worn that, in other lands, the wearing of such attire would have

stamped the wearer as a pauper. The women are fair-haired, fair-complexioned, slatternly creatures, somewhat resembling the Scandinavian type, stout and strongly built, and fairly clean in appearance. The men not at work seemed to be gathered mostly in the liquor-shops or to loaf outside its doors ; but, in as far as I could notice, they drank very little, and were certainly quiet, well-behaved, and, for the most part, silent. Every now and then a woman in passing by would exchange a remark with the crowd of men gathered around the liquor-store ; but there was no general conversation of any kind, either inside or outside the doors of the tavern. When I visited Panscherevow the violets and primroses were just out, and, as there is a considerable demand for flowers amidst the townfolk of Sofia, our carriage was surrounded with village children bearing nosegays in their hands. They never, however, asked you to buy, or begged or thrust their wares upon you with the importunity of the Eastern mendicant. They held out their flowers stolidly ; but, if you showed no wish to purchase, they went away equally stolidly, and left you in peace without asking for anything. The children were one and all ragged, ill-shod, unkempt, but for all that they looked healthy and well fed, while the general lack of beauty in their features and figures was redeemed by a pleasant smile. When the attempt to do a trade in flowers had been discontinued as useless the children returned to their games. After the wont of Bulgarian children they played quietly and silently, without screams and without disputes.

In the cottages, into whose interior I could catch a glimpse, I could see no sign of the picture of the Virgin

Mary, to be found so invariably in the huts of the Russian moujiks. Neither here nor elsewhere in my travels through Bulgaria did I come across any of the roadside shrines and crosses, so frequent in Russia, before which you may any day see crowds of peasants kneeling and praying, even when the snow lies deep upon the ground. Yet, in an odd way of their own, the Bulgarians are devout believers; they are also scrupulous as to observing fasts and going to confession. During Lent squads of the regiments stationed at Sofia were marched down three or four times a day to the church, and after confession received absolution *en bloc.* In as far as I could calculate from the frequency with which I met these squads going and coming to the church, every soldier in the garrison must have had to confess at least once a week during Lent. At this season the peasants absolutely refuse not only to eat meat, poultry, or butter, but in most instances decline to supply them for sale in the towns. The result is, that even for strangers who are not members of the Greek Church, Lent time in Bulgaria becomes more or less of a penitential season. The peasants avowedly attach extreme value to the due celebration of the Church services, and pay the fees demanded by parish popes for baptisms, weddings, and funerals, without any great amount of grumbling. The pope, in the great majority of parishes, is a peasant of the same class as his parishioners, too much occupied with the cares of his family, with looking after his cattle, and above all with the tilling of his plot of land, to be able to trouble himself greatly about spiritual matters. As long as he can get his flock to pay their dues and to attend service on the great festivals of the Church, he considers that he has done his duty. In the same way, when once the

peasants have got a church where the ritual of their creed is properly performed by a duly appointed pope, their religious requirements, such as they are, are amply satisfied. Their lives are too hard to allow them to pay much attention to spiritual matters, and I suspect their whole tone of mind would, under any conditions, prove eminently unfavourable to the development of religious fervour. So far as Christianity consists in hating Turks and Jews, the Bulgarian peasants are sincere Christians; but their religion has hardly progressed, as yet, beyond that somewhat rudimentary stage. This view of mine is derived mainly from what has been told me by every resident in the country to whom I have spoken on the subject. But all I have seen myself, here and in other Sclav countries, confirms me in my belief that the Greek Faith is the least spiritual of all the various creeds of Christendom, and that the Bulgarians are the least religious-minded, in a doctrinal sense, of all the races which constitute Christendom after the Eastern rite. It does not follow that because the Bulgarians are for the most part ignorant of, and indifferent to, religious dogma of every kind, they are not attached to their own faith, or still less are not prepared to regard all persons who differ from them as heretics and infidels deserving of extermination. All experience shows that men will fight as hard and die as bravely for the most ceremonial of creeds, as they will for the highest forms of religious belief. All I wish to point out is, that spiritual fervour and doctrinal zeal are not, and cannot be, the same important factors in the daily life of a peasant country, as they are in that of more highly cultivated and more wealthy communities, where large classes have at once the

means and the leisure to indulge in religious contemplation. The church—by which I mean the material fabric, not the spiritual body—is a conspicuous object in every Bulgarian village, ranking next in size and importance to the village school-house. Both church and school-house are invariably plain white-washed buildings. The best house in Panscherevow is that of the mayor, or rather the *kmet*, or deputy-mayor, as the place is not deemed important enough to have a full-blown mayor of its own. A sort of barn is attached to the mayor's dwelling, which serves as the town house of the village, where the Communal Council holds its sittings and where local justice is administered.

Take it altogether, I should say the inhabitants of Panscherevow—in common, for that matter, with those of most Bulgarian villages—seem to me not to have a bad time. If there is no luxury, there is a good deal of rough comfort, and if their wants are few, these wants are fairly well satisfied. Barring the taxes and military service, they lead much the sort of lives they would like to lead; and that, after all, is about as much as human nature can reasonably expect. However, I ought to add that I visited most of the Bulgarian villages when the trees were green, the air warm, and the sun shining. In the long, bleak winter time a peasant's life in Bulgaria may well wear a less cheerful aspect. The general aspect of all the villages I visited seemed to denote the prevalence of a general coarse well-being amidst the villagers, equally removed from refinement on the one hand and from destitution on the other. In the whole course of my travels I never came across a single dwelling, outside the towns, which you could imagine by any flight of fancy to

be the abode of a man of fortune, or even of a well-to-do tradesman. Still, I have no doubt that the great majority of the occupants of these mud cottages have more money hoarded up than you would find in the possession of any English peasant farmer who would be content to live in a similar tenement, under similar conditions of existence. Whatever their hoarded wealth may be, no trace of it is to be noticed inside the houses, where the Bulgarian peasant families live from the hour of their birth to that of their death. The most comfortable dwelling I ever saw, in any of the Bulgarian villages which I visited, was that of a pope in charge of one of the many half-deserted monasteries which are to be found throughout the country. The monastery lies half hidden in one of the ravines which intersect the sides of Mount Vitosch. It stands some five or six hundred feet above the plain, and commands exquisitely beautiful views of the champaign flats, over which the shadows of the clouds float and shift under the sparkling sunlight. If ever Sofia becomes a capital after our Western fashion, the slopes of Mount Vitosch will become valuable as chosen sites for suburban residences. Even as it is, the monastery in question is frequently visited on Sundays and feast-days as a pleasure resort by the people of Sofia. Sparkling rivulets run down the mountain-side close to the convent, and in these streams there is excellent trout-fishing. Good shooting, too, is to be found in the neighbourhood; and if you wish to make the ascent of Vitosch, the monastery is as good a place as any other from which to make your start. If you are not over particular as to your quarters, you can hire rooms for the night from the prior of the convent, who provides entertainment for man and beast. The

general look of the place is something between a roadside tavern and a farmyard ; all that remains of the ancient monastery is a small chapel almost hidden from sight amidst the stables and outhouses. Geese, ducks, fowls, and pigs straggle all over the place, wandering in and out of the guest-rooms, which open on a wooden balcony. A coarse plank table was placed in the courtyard, at which the prior was seated to receive his visitors and customers, and from whence he was able to keep his eye on the farm-servants and on the live-stock of his farm. He was a genial, fresh-coloured, not over clean old gentleman, between seventy and eighty ; he had a long, white beard, and was clad in a singularly shabby and musty black surplice, with the usual tall, straight, black, round chimney-pot hat on his head. He gave us coffee and mastik, smoked the cigarettes we offered him, and, both in his look and manner, resembled the landlord of a country tavern rather than an ecclesiastical dignitary of high rank. One of our party spoke Turkish fluently, and as the prior was a Bulgarian who had been born, and had lived the greater part of his life, in Macedonia, the language of the Turks was as familiar to him as his own. He informed us that he had been compelled to quit Macedonia some twelve years ago because he had given political offence, and that he had then come to Bulgaria, where he had been kindly received and appointed to the priorship of the convent. He seemed to entertain as bitter an animosity against the Turks as was consistent with a very good-humoured and easy-going disposition. On our referring to the recent withdrawal by the Sultan of the edict concerning the schools in Macedonia, which had given such offence to the Bulgarians, he observed that even if the Turks ever happened to do what

was right one day, they always did what was wrong the next. He added that the grievances of Macedonia would never be removed till the Turks had been driven out of the country. It seemed to me he was much more interested in our questions about the crops and about the accommodation he could offer to visitors, than he was when the conversation turned upon political or ecclesiastical matters. He informed us that he had a stipend of £320 a year from the State; that, besides this, he made a certain amount of money by his farm and poultry-yard, and still more by letting the rooms of the convent during the summer months. He also got a little—but, as he added, a very little—from the fees and offerings of the village hard by, whose parish church was the convent chapel. He complained also that out of his stipend he was compelled to pay the services of a coadjutor pope, and to keep the church in repair. What he may have paid the curate I cannot say, but from the look of the chapel, which the prior took us to visit, it must have been long years since a penny had been laid out on repairs of any kind. The chapel, the prior assured us, had been built between five and six centuries ago, before the Turks had conquered Bulgaria. Being ignorant of all architectural lore, I could form no opinion as to the antiquity of the building. The chapel was so dark, the walls and pavements were so obscured with the smoke of wax-tapers, that it was impossible to decipher the inscriptions on the flags, or to discover what the blotches of faded colours on the walls were intended to represent. The prior seemed to know as little about the convent's history as I did myself, and all he could tell us was that both it and the chapel were very old indeed, and that there was no money

forthcoming to place the chapel in proper repair, with new crosses, new pictures of the Virgin, new missals, and new vestments, such as would befit the historic dignity of the shrine. It struck me that to any one at all versed in ecclesiastical architecture, the chapel would have proved a sort of treasure-trove. But the opinion of the prior seemed to be that it was quite good enough as it stood, for all the use that was ever made of it. The day on which I visited the place was the Greek Good Friday, but there had been no service performed there that day, as the peasants of the neighbouring village had all gone to Sofia to attend the weekly market, and nobody had come to church. At its very fullest, the chapel could not well contain more than a score of people. Altogether, I should consider the prior had a very easy berth, and, even in wealthier countries, would have been considered well paid for such clerical labours as he performed. He told us that he owned two houses in Sofia, and that in the winter time he resided there himself, because the air in the hills was too keen and too sharp for a man of his age. In his absence, the curate looks after the spiritual requirements of the village, and the prior only returns when the visitors commence driving out from the capital. I saw no reason to suppose that the prior neglected his duty, either in his own opinion or in that of his parishioners. The reason why I have dwelt upon his personal position, as he told it to us, is that the incident seems to me to be a curious illustration of Bulgarian national character. Here was a man who, in virtue of his position, was of more than average education, who was certainly not unintelligent, and who was possessed of means which would have enabled him to live in considerable comfort ; yet he was

content to pass his life as a peasant amongst peasants, not from any high ideal of the existence best befitting a minister of God, but simply because the sort of life he thus led was the one most in accordance with his own tastes, as it is with those of the great mass of his fellow-countrymen.

INSTITUTIONS OF THE PEASANT STATE.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BULGARIAN CHURCH.

THE Church has played a leading part in the political history of Bulgaria. The legends as to the conversion of the national hero, Boris, are probably about as mythical as those which tell the story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. But amidst a primitive people, these legends still serve to identify the orthodox faith with the origin of the Bulgarian nation. At any rate, whether mythical or not, the alleged wholesale conversion of the Bulgars to the religion of the Cross, if it was rapid, was not permanent; time after time they relapsed into Paganism; and, even when they had definitely become Christianized, it was long doubtful whether they would throw in their lot with the Roman or the Eastern Communion. Under Assen and his successors, various negotiations took place between the Vatican and the Court of Tirnova, the general purport of which appears to have been that the Bulgarians were perfectly willing to join the Church of Rome, if the Papacy could guarantee them protection against the Greek Empire. As the Popes

were either unable or unwilling to offer anything beyond spiritual aid, the rulers of Bulgaria seem to have thought it wiser to stand in with the Greek Church, and thus, at any rate, to secure friends at the Byzantine Court. Anyhow, long before the time when the Turks became masters of Bulgaria, the Orthodox Greek Faith had been accepted as the national religion of the country; and so it has remained for centuries. The conversions to Islam, though numerous, were not sufficiently plentiful to affect the general character of the race. Under Turkish rule the Bulgarians as a body remained Greek Christians; and here, as elsewhere in the East, the spirit of nationality, in as far as it existed, became identical with the profession of religious belief. The Bulgarian Mahommedan became, to all intents and purposes, a Turk by nationality. The Bulgarian Christian remained a Bulgarian, not so much in virtue of his race, as of his creed.

Given these conditions, it would have seemed natural that the Bulgarians and the Greeks, united as they were by a common servitude and a common creed, should have been drawn together by their common animosities and aspirations. This would probably have been the case but for an accident of Moslem rule. From the time of the Turkish conquest, the Greeks who continued to reside at Constantinople, and who from the quarter where they resided were called Phanariotes, contrived to make themselves useful, and even indispensable, to their Mussulmen masters. The Phanariotes, gifted with the supple Hellenic intellect, offered themselves as middle-men between the Turks and the subject Rayah populations. Then, as now, the Turks, when their fanaticism was not ablaze, disliked the trouble of administration, and were content

to let their Giaour subjects alone as long as they paid tribute to the Ottoman Treasury, provided soldiers for the Ottoman armies, and contributed to the private wants of the Pashas and their harems. A sort of tacit understanding was established, by which the Greeks of the Phanar farmed the revenues of the Christian provinces of Turkey, and notably of Bulgaria. Probably the Phanariotes were not altogether so corrupt and so degraded as they were considered by their co-religionists. But they unquestionably displayed all the vices which, from the days of Juvenal, have characterized the Hellenic race, when in subjection to races of weaker intellect, but stronger will than their own. They were content to do the dirty work, which the Turks required doing, and were too indolent and too proud to do for themselves. One of the many sources of revenue, out of which the Phanariotes filled the Turkish Treasury, while at the same time levying toll for their own use, consisted in the sale of all the lucrative posts in the Bulgarian Church. For nearly five hundred years every piece of important preferment amidst the Bulgarian clergy, from the Patriarchate downwards, was put up to auction. As soon as the successful purchaser had enjoyed what the vendors considered a reasonable time in which to recoup himself for his purchase money, he was deposed by the Porte at the instance of the Phanar; and his place was again put up for auction. In the course of four centuries there are said to have been one hundred and forty Patriarchs of Bulgaria, so that the average tenure of the Patriarchal office did not amount to three years in duration. The Church was thus served by priests of low character, men of disreputable if not infamous lives, who were at once servile and venal, and who—the worst offence

of all in Bulgarian eyes—were, as a rule, of foreign race. I cannot learn that this scandalous state of things materially affected the attachment of the Bulgarians to their national creed. Here, as in all Sclav countries, religion is a matter rather of ritual than of dogma ; and so long as a priest is competent to administer the sacraments and perform the required services, the personal respect or disrespect in which he may be held in his individual capacity hardly counts for anything in regard to his spiritual authority. The popular objection to the Phanariote clergy was not so much that they were wine-bibbers, loose livers, and a disgrace to their cloth, as that they were foreigners, the nominees and representatives of an alien and detested rule. The intensity of this dislike to a foreign priesthood was accelerated by the revival of the sentiment of nationality, which in Bulgaria, as elsewhere in Turkey, coincided with the decline of the Ottoman power. The earlier portion of the present century witnessed the birth of a national Bulgarian party ; and the first efforts of this party were directed to removing the patronage of the Bulgarian Church from the hands of the Patriarch of Constantinople, who, up to that time, had been a mere creature of the Porte.

As the other Christian provinces of Turkey in Europe, such as Moldavia, Wallachia, Servia, and Greece, emancipated themselves gradually from Turkish rule, they founded what are called auto-cephalous Churches. That is, they took into their own hands the patronage and administration of the local branches of the orthodox Greek Church, while still recognizing the supreme authority in all matters spiritual of the Patriarch of Constantinople. The Patriarchs, though they objected to these curtailments

of their jurisdiction, accepted them as matters of fact; probably because they had no power to withstand them. But in the case of Bulgaria, they met her demand for an auto-cephalous Church with an absolute refusal. The quarrel went on for many years with varying vicissitudes. At last, in 1870, the Porte was induced by the representations of the Great Powers, and especially of Russia, to accede to the demand of the Bulgarians for religious autonomy. In that year a firman was issued, by which the right of appointment to all clerical preferments in the province was taken away from the Patriarch of Constantinople and transferred to an Exarch, who was to be elected by the Synod of the Bulgarian Church, to be nominated on approval by the Sultan, and to reside permanently at Constantinople. Upon this the Patriarch of Constantinople issued a proclamation declaring that the Bulgarians were schismatics, and, in consequence, were no longer members of the orthodox Communion.

In days long gone by, when, amongst other knowledge I have since forgotten, I had to acquire a certain smattering of the theological history of Christendom, I remember wasting much time and study in a barren effort to understand the doctrinal grounds of the great schism which rent asunder the Latin and the Eastern Churches. I have retained a vague and confused recollection of the controversy between the Homoousiasts and the Homoiousiasts, upon which the two Churches separated. But this schism seems to me absolutely pellucid compared to that which, within our own times, cut off the Bulgarians from the Orthodox Church. I presume that even a Greek Patriarch must have accused the Bulgarians of having fallen away in some respects from the doctrines of the true faith before

he ventured on their excommunication. The only vestige, however, of an explanation on this point I could obtain from my Bulgarian informants was, that the demand for the nomination of their own clergy by their own Synod was deemed by the Patriarch of Constantinople to be an infraction of his supreme spiritual authority as the recognized head of the Eastern Church; and that, by so infringing his authority, the Bulgarians had laid themselves open to the charge of schism.

From a religious point of view the excommunication seems to have fallen flat. The Greek, Russian, Servian, and Roumanian Churches have never consented to regard the Bulgarians as schismatics; and up to the present day the clergy of the Bulgarian Church are allowed to officiate as priests in the Muscovite, Serb, Rouman, and Hellenic Churches. On the other hand, the quasi isolation of the Bulgarian Church, which was brought about by the action of the Patriarch, tended to forward the nationalist movement amidst the Bulgarians, and to identify the desire for national independence with that of religious autonomy.

Under the existing Constitution, the Orthodox Greek Faith is the recognized religion of the State; and the National Church is also the State Church. The clergy receive stipends from the Treasury, varying from seventy pounds a year, in the large towns, to thirty pounds in the villages. Besides this stipend, they are allowed to exact fees at a fixed scale for the performance of exceptional religious services, such as baptisms, marriages, and burials. They are also allowed to make a profit by the sale of tapers and images. The Church, too, owns properties, though not to a very large extent, in various parts of the country, and especially in the towns. These properties,

however, are administered by State officials, who decide what portions of their revenue should be set apart for schools or general purposes other than the direct payment of the clergy. There is, at any rate in theory, absolute religious toleration throughout Bulgaria. The priests of all sects of any importance, such as the Mahommedans, the Catholics, the Jews, receive stipends from the State on the same scale as the national clergy.

The governing body of the National Church is the Synod, which is composed of the Bishops. Whenever a vacancy occurs in a see, the Synod nominates three candidates for the vacant post. Each parish in the diocese elects a certain number of delegates in proportion to its population ; these delegates meet together and record their votes in favour of one of the three candidates nominated by the Synod ; the name of the candidate who obtains the largest number of votes is submitted to the Exarch for approval, and, if approved, is nominated by him to the vacant see ; the nomination, however, does not become legally valid till the Bishop-elect has been formally appointed by the Government. All offences committed by the clergy against ecclesiastical discipline are tried and punished by the Synod ; but for all offences against the civil law, priests and laymen alike are tried by the civil tribunals. A striking instance of this supremacy of the civil over the ecclesiastical jurisdictions was furnished the other day. In the course of last year the Metropolitan Clement, who has always been noted as a violent partisan of Russia, preached a sermon in his own cathedral, in which he denounced Prince Ferdinand in very violent terms. For this outrage he was brought to trial by the Government, before the civil courts, on the charge of

having used treasonable language. The Synod protested against the trial on the plea that the offence, if offence it was, was of an ecclesiastical character, and ought, by rights, to be subject to their jurisdiction. The objection was overruled. The Metropolitan was tried and convicted by the civil courts, and sentenced to enforced confinement in a monastery, or, in other words, to imprisonment. Last February, an appeal was made to the Superior Court to quash the conviction on the ground of non-jurisdiction. The appeal was dismissed, and the Metropolitan was left imprisoned for a few weeks, after which he was released on a pardon being granted him by the Prince.

The priesthood, almost without an exception, are taken from the peasant class. Under the present *régime* a school has been established for the purpose of educating the lads who are designed for Holy Orders. The experiment has not proved very successful, and the Bishops complain that they find great and increasing difficulty in filling up the ranks of the clergy. I believe this is mainly due to the fact that, under the public school system, the scholars acquire an education which induces them to prefer the pursuits of civil life to those of the Church. I am told, too, that the post of Pope, as the village priests are called, has become much less attractive than it used to be owing to the changed conditions of the country. In the Turkish days the Pope was usually given the privilege of keeping the village liquor store. This is now altered, and the Popes, therefore, are neither so well-to-do nor so influential in position as they were formerly. Moreover, in Bulgaria, as in most other countries where the Greek Faith is the national religion, the priesthood is almost always recruited from the lower ranks of the community. Ritual, as I have said,

is more important than dogma; to intone well is a gift of more value to a parish priest than to possess the power of preaching. The high aspirations which, in other lands, lead men to become ministers of the sanctuary in the hope of saving souls, can hardly find much scope in a church where the possession of a fine figure and a flowing beard are indispensable requisites for high ecclesiastical preferment. The ranks of the priesthood are, therefore, naturally filled up by the sons of the poorer peasants, to whom the small stipend of their cure secures an income, on which they can marry, have families, and lead a life of what, to them, seems comfort. In fact, the Bulgarian clergy bear a considerable resemblance to what I think the Irish priesthood would be, if they were allowed to marry and were paid by the State. As things are, the village Popes, during the greater part of the year, lead the lives of ordinary Bulgarian peasants; and it is only on Sundays, feast-days, and special occasions that their clerical functions differentiate them from their neighbours. Thus, while their spiritual authority is weak, their social influence is very great in a community mainly composed of small peasant proprietors of their own class and race and creed. So long, therefore, as the general policy of the Government is in accordance with the traditions, aspirations, and prejudices of the Bulgarian people, it can count confidently on the support of the national priesthood.

The schism, about which I have spoken, has also contributed, if I may use the word, to Bulgarize the Bulgarian Church. The clergy here are not influenced to the same extent as the clergy of other orthodox Greek communions by Pan-Sclavonic ideas. Their dislike of Greek ecclesiastical supremacy, which has been handed down by the traditions

of the Phanariote era, has been accentuated by the conduct of the Greeks, who have all along resented the independent existence of Bulgaria as a possible barrier to the accomplishment of their "grand idea," the creation of a Greek kingdom on the Bosphorus, in the event of the disruption of the Ottoman Empire. Various unfriendly acts, of which the Bulgarians have of late had cause to complain at the hands of the Porte, are popularly attributed to Greek intrigue at Stamboul; and I think the Bulgarians would view with extreme reluctance any idea of placing themselves again under the jurisdiction of the Greek Patriarch. Of course, the present arrangement cannot be a permanent one; and whenever the day arrives, when Bulgaria becomes nominally as well as practically independent of Turkey, the head of the Bulgarian Church cannot possibly be allowed to reside at Constantinople as an official of the Porte.

The position of the present Exarch is one of great difficulty. He is often blamed by his own countrymen for not taking up a sufficiently high ground in defending the rights of Bulgaria; but it is not easy to see how he can take up any such ground. After all, the Exarch is treated at Constantinople as a Turkish official under the orders and in the service of the Turkish Government. Last summer the Exarch was ordered by his doctors to go to Carlsbad for his health, and applied for leave of absence, signifying his intention of calling on the way at Sofia, in order to pay his respects to the Prince, whom he has never yet seen. The request was refused by the Sultan, and the Exarch was told that, if his health was affected, the waters of Broussa were quite as good as those of Carlsbad. Again, a few months ago, the Exarch bought

a house at Constantinople, which was the property of the former German Ambassador. The sale was completed; the deposit money of ten per cent. of the purchase price of £15,000 had been duly paid, when the Exarch received notice from the Government that the bargain must be broken off, as he was not at liberty to change his abode without the previous permission of the Turkish authorities, and that, in the present instance, this permission would not be granted. This high-handed action, in a matter concerning which the Turks would if left to themselves be utterly and supremely indifferent, is attributed to Greek and Russian intrigues. The Greek Patriarch is reported to have protested against the Exarch being allowed to occupy a better residence than his own, while some of the more opulent members of the Phanar were anxious to get the Ambassador's house for themselves. Finally, the matter was settled by the Sultan's making a present to the Exarch of an equally good plot of land for the erection of a Patriarchal residence. Still it is a matter of serious inconvenience to the Bulgarian Government that the Exarch should be compelled to reside in a foreign country, and, if the recent reconciliation between Sofia and Constantinople should continue in force, a strong effort will be made to induce the Sultan to consent to the return of the head of the Bulgarian Church to his own country.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LAW OF THE REALM.

THE founders of the Bulgarian State have as yet evinced no desire to regenerate the country in a hurry, to place all its institutions on a logical footing, or to carry into immediate practice the theories of government to which, by the charter, they stand committed. When once the abstract principles which I have enumerated in my account of the Constitution had been embodied in the charter, no special haste was shown about giving them practical application. Hitherto the motto of Bulgarian statesmanship has been *solvitur ambulando.*

Thus, though Bulgaria has existed as an independent State for some fifteen years, it is still without any complete written code. Under the rule of Turkey, justice, in as far as it was administered at all, was administered in accordance with the Turkish Code, which was introduced throughout the Ottoman Empire in the earlier part of the present century, and which was based upon the Code Napoléon. During the Russian occupation, a new system of criminal and civil procedure was established in the country analogous to that which prevails in the dominions of the Czar. But the system did not work well, and has had to be largely modified by subsequent legislation. A number of laws have at different times been passed by

the Sobranje, dealing with a variety of subjects, such as mortgages, rights of succession, the guardianship of minors, and so forth. In every session of the Sobranje commissions are appointed to frame laws concerning matters on which immediate legislation is urgently required. When all such questions have been discussed and dealt with, a complete code is to be framed. For the present, all matters for which provision has not been made by special legislation are regulated by the provisions of the old Turkish law, which, as I have said, is substantially identical with the original Code Napoléon, but which does not contain the modifications made in that code in France subsequent to the date of its promulgation.

In the Turkish days, the law was an open profession ; and anybody who liked could plead in the courts. At the time of the emancipation there were probably not a score of Bulgarians who had ever made law a study. At the outset, therefore, anybody who chose could act as an advocate or as a legal adviser. But of late years nobody, not already in practice, is allowed to act as a lawyer without a special authorization from the Government. This authorization is only given to candidates who have taken a degree in law in foreign universities, or who have served as communal judges for fifteen years, or who are able to pass an examination conducted at the Ministry of Justice. At present there are about a thousand duly qualified lawyers in Bulgaria, a considerable proportion of whom have been educated in foreign legal schools.

The judges are functionaries of the State. They are appointed by the Government, paid by the Government, and may be removed by the Government. In every commune, however small, there is a judge who forms an *ex*

officio member of the Communal Council, elected by the inhabitants. These communal judges have very limited jurisdiction. They have no power to inflict personal punishment in criminal cases; all they can do is to impose a fine, not exceeding sixteen shillings in amount, for a breach of the law; and in civil cases they only possess the right of summary jurisdiction when the amount at issue does not exceed £2. Their sentences have to be submitted to the approval of the district judges of the district in which the commune is situated. These district judges hold office on the same tenure as the communal judges, but their jurisdiction is more extensive. They can impose fines to the extent of £2, and can decide suits concerning sums not exceeding £4; they may also try charges of theft, not aggravated by violence. Next in the legal hierarchy come the judges of First Instance, who hold courts in the *chef lieux* of every province. They have authority to adjudicate in all civil and criminal cases, but their decision may be referred to the Courts of Appeal, of which there are four in Bulgaria; and from these courts there lies a reference to the Supreme Court of Appeal at Sofia.

Trial by jury is still amidst the reforms of the future. In the opinion of the Government, the country is not yet ripe for its institution. The present generation of adult peasants have had little or no education; and their ideas of justice are formed on what may be called the Cadi principle. When a new generation comes to the front, which has been educated at the national schools, and which has learned discipline in the national army, the peasants, it is thought, may become fit to act as jurymen; but as things are, the estimation in which a Bulgarian prisoner might hold, whether for good or bad, in the opinion of his fellow-townsmen,

would have much more to do with his conviction or acquittal, than the strength of the evidence connecting him with the perpetration of the particular crime of which he stood accused. In the Courts of First Instance, however, a system has been of late years introduced, which possesses some of the advantages of trial by jury. In all criminal cases of a serious character, a certain number of townspeople—men, as a rule, of some education and local standing—are appointed to sit with the judges and to hear the evidence adduced for or against the prisoner. When the case is concluded, the verdict is given by the judges and assessors in conjunction, the vote of the majority deciding the question of guilt or innocence. With the giving of the verdict of "Guilty" or "Not guilty," the functions of the assessors are at an end; and the question of the punishment to be inflicted, in the event of conviction, is left to the sole arbitrament of the judges. Thus, in cases where political bias may be supposed to enter, the prisoner has the advantage of being tried before a tribunal composed of private citizens as well as of functionaries of the Government.

In Bulgaria, as in all countries where the judicial system is based on French procedure, great importance is attached to there being at least not less than three judges on the bench. The multiplicity of judges is supposed to secure a better chance of a fair trial, and also a greater uniformity of sentences, than could be expected under the jurisdiction of a single judge. In all the courts above the District Courts there are always three or more judges to hear every case that is brought before them. The difficulties of locomotion and the long distances which divide town from town, and even village from village, render any

amalgamation of the courts extremely difficult. The total number of judges is very large in proportion to the population; and the salaries paid them are, according to our notions, very small. Indeed, a considerable increase of judicial salaries is recognized as one of the reforms which ought to be undertaken as soon as the revenue admits of any large additional expenditure. It is obvious, even to the Bulgarian peasants, that poorly paid judges are less likely to be independent and honest than judges who are comparatively above the reach of pecuniary temptation. The evils, however, of an underpaid judiciary are less flagrant here than might have been expected. All salaries, private as well as public, are necessarily low in a country where there is no wealthy class, and where the national instincts are penurious. Moreover, official rank possesses an exceptional importance in a State where there are few other social distinctions. Judicial posts are therefore eagerly sought after, even though the pay is poor. At any rate, the courts seem to command public confidence.

Another legal reform which is urgently needed in Bulgaria is the revisal of the laws affecting public companies. The present law does not contain the modifications introduced into the French Code with respect to Joint Stock Associations. This is the more to be regretted as the advantages of *Sociétés anonymes*, or, more correctly speaking, of Co-operative Societies, are becoming recognized in Bulgaria. Throughout the provinces a number of associations have been formed of late years for the purpose of carrying on local industries. The members of these associations, who are mostly small farmers, pay so much a month as a subscription to the fund; and the funds thus subscribed constitute the capital out of which the

industries in question are carried on for the benefit of the subscribers. The majority of these local associations have proved fairly successful ; and if money ever becomes more plentiful in Bulgaria, there will, I think, be a large development of co-operative enterprise. This development would be greatly facilitated if the French laws with regard to limited liability, in their modified form, were made applicable to Bulgaria. Still, even if this was done, it would not be very easy for foreign companies to take an independent part in the exploitation of the great natural resources of the country. Yet, owing to the absence of local wealth and experience, it is only by the aid of foreign enterprise and foreign capital that these resources can be rapidly developed. I am assured that, though in theory there is no reason why foreign capital should not be employed here in local industries with great advantage, there are in practice various obstacles which cannot well be overcome. The Government has the right to grant concessions to any company, native or foreign, for the working of mines, the reclamation of lands, or the establishment of manufactures ; and the Ministers are not indisposed to accord such concessions. But the concessionaire, when he has obtained his concession, finds himself hampered and thwarted at every step by the claims of the commune in which his enterprise has to be conducted. The authority of the commune within its own area is very great ; and any member of the commune can raise difficulties which would militate against the concession being worked successfully, on the plea that it interfered with his supply of water, his rights of pasturage, or the cultivation of his lands. There is as yet no clear law with reference to the relative rights of the State and the commune, when the rights of the former

come into conflict with local interests. The communal system is so identified with the ideas and customs of the nation, that it is difficult to modify the powers of the State over the internal administration of the communes to the disadvantage of the latter, until the Bulgarian public are brought to see that they have a personal interest in augmenting the legal authority of the central Government.

In view of the greatly increased prosperity of the trading classes, and the rapid growth of the towns, the peasantry consider—and this opinion of theirs is also held by the Government—that they contribute an unduly large proportion to the public revenue. Not only is the land-tax unreasonably heavy, so heavy, indeed, as to cripple the resources which ought to be available for the improvement of the land ; but, owing to the taxes being now collected directly by the Government instead of indirectly by the farming system, and owing to the repayment of these taxes being at present enforced in cash and not in produce, the burden of taxation weighs more heavily nowadays on the peasants than it did in the old times. Any proposal, therefore, to shift the burden of taxation to any material extent from agriculture to trade would not only be just in itself, but would be so popular as to reconcile public opinion to a considerable restriction of communal autonomy. For the present, however, the Capitulations stand in the way of any adequate redistribution of the taxes as against the towns and in favour of the country. Bulgaria is still nominally an integral portion of the Ottoman Empire, and is, therefore, subject to the provisions of the Capitulations.

By these provisions, a foreign resident in Bulgaria, as in all Turkish provinces, is not liable to pay any internal

tax beyond the house duty, and escapes scot free from the other home taxes to which the natives are subjected. For instance, every Bulgarian who carries on a trade or profession, or keeps a shop, has to obtain a license for the privilege. The charges for these licenses are very low and might easily be raised without injustice to the individual and without injury to the progress of trade. But under the Capitulations, no foreigner can be compelled to take out a license for the purpose of carrying on his trade; and therefore the obvious result of materially increasing the charge for licenses would be to place the native trader at a disadvantage as compared with foreigners, and to transfer native trade into the hands of strangers. In the same way, the internal excise duties cannot be augmented, as when once goods belonging to a foreigner have been introduced into the country, after paying the import duty at the frontier, no further tax can—in virtue of the Capitulations—be imposed upon them. On fiscal as well as moral grounds, it would be most desirable to raise the excise duty on spirits. But if this were done, the practical result would be to ruin the native manufacturers and vendors of spirituous liquors, and to hand the liquor trade over to foreigners. Again, the income of the town municipalities is mainly derived from the octroi duties; and it is impossible to carry out many local improvements, urgently required in the towns, without further funds. But, by the Capitulations, octroi duties cannot be levied on foreign goods on entrance into any town within the country to a higher extent than two per cent. of the value of the article taxed. Thus, the Capitulations practically bar the way to any equitable redistribution of Bulgarian taxation. The plain truth is that here, as in every civilized state,

the whole system of the Capitulations has become a barbarous anomaly. When the Capitulations were originally framed, they were intended to protect foreigners against oppression at the hands of the Turk. Nowadays, owing to the changes in the relative positions of the Rayah and the Turk, they have become instruments of oppression against the natives, whether they happen to be Mahommedans or Christians.

The separate jurisdiction, under which foreigners are placed by the Capitulations, in respect of criminal offences, though an even graver theoretical anomaly, is not so much of a practical abuse in as far as Bulgaria is concerned. The administration of the law is, on the whole, so well and cheaply conducted by the native tribunals, that foreigners attach little value to the privilege of being tried before Consular Courts. The foreign Powers, too, have shown no very keen anxiety to enforce in Bulgaria their full rights under the Capitulations ; and a certain number of modifications have been introduced without protest on the part of foreign countries into the practical working of this exceptional jurisdiction. All cases to which a Bulgarian is a party are usually tried before the native tribunals ; and a delegate, appointed by the consular representative of any foreigner placed on his trial, though admitted to the court and entitled to inspect all the documents produced in evidence, is not allowed, as he is in Turkey, to be present at the deliberations of the presiding judges. Even forcible entry on the part of the police into the domicile of a foreigner for the purposes of investigation, which is forbidden under the Capitulations, is allowed to pass without more than a formal protest from his official representatives, whenever the Government is able to show reasonable cause for the

action of the police. Here, as elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire, the Greeks are the persons who take the most unfair advantage of the privileges accorded by the Capitulations, and whose pretensions are most actively upheld by their own Government. But hitherto the representatives of the Great Powers at Sofia have not supported the various efforts made by Greece to enforce the strict letter of these obsolete conventions. In all right and equity, Bulgaria has as good a right as Servia and Roumania to be set free from the trammels of the Capitulations. But for various reasons, it is not for the present the policy of the Bulgarian Government to press for the redress of a grievance whose removal could hardly be effected without the dissolution of the nominal bond which still unites Bulgaria to the Ottoman Empire. So, for the time being, the peasantry will have to remain overtaxed because the existence of the Capitulations unintentionally prevents any fair share of the national taxation being placed on the trading and shopkeeping interests.

CHAPTER X.

PUBLIC EDUCATION.

THE desire for education amidst the Bulgarian peasantry amounts almost to a passion. That this should be so seems strange in a country where the great mass of the population are extremely ignorant, very much set on their own ways, and averse to innovations of any kind. The Boers, who in many respects so closely resemble the Bulgarians, are completely free from this craze for book-learning. What was good enough for their fathers is, in their opinion, good enough for themselves, and will be good enough for their children after them. But in this respect the Bulgarians are completely different. I cannot make out that any educational census has ever been taken in the country. The common opinion, however, is that in the rural districts, at all events, the proportion of the adult population who have even an elementary knowledge of writing or reading is extremely small. In the Turkish days the village priests never took any trouble to impart to their parishioners the scanty stock of education they themselves possessed ; and in as far as they had any opinion at all on the matter, that opinion was unfavourable rather than otherwise to the diffusion of book-learning amidst the laity. Yet ever since the liberation of Bulgaria, the peasants have been almost morbidly eager to have their children taught

at school; and the system of Free Education, which has been introduced throughout the State, is warmly supported by popular sentiment. This is the more curious as the peasant farmers till their own lands themselves, not by paid labourers; and the services of every member of the family are required to supply the requisite amount of field labour. The children of the house are set to work early, and the loss of their assistance during school hours must be a serious matter to their parents. The only explanation I can offer for this general thirst for education amongst a people, who have apparently very little taste for book-learning in itself, is the following. The Bulgarians, as I have already remarked, have an intense belief in the past glories of their country, and have also an equally intense faith in the future which lies before it. Whether rightly or wrongly, they have got it into their heads that popular education is an essential condition of Bulgaria's taking, what they deem, her proper place in the world; and when once an idea of any kind has got into Bulgarian heads, its dislodgment is a matter of excessive difficulty. Then, too, there prevails throughout the community an equally general but more practical belief that education opens the door to the public service, the only form of employment, other than that of agriculture, to be found in a country with few and small industries, little trade and less capital. There is hardly a man in the service of the State who was not born a peasant of peasant parents; and the spectacle of the success achieved by the ministers and public officials, who owe their position almost entirely to the fact that they had received an education somewhat above their fellows, renders every Bulgarian parent desirous to obtain like advantages for his own children.

This latter view is confirmed by the fact that the Bulgarians attach comparatively little importance to the education of girls.

Be the explanation what it may, the fact remains that since her liberation Bulgaria has succeeded in establishing a very thorough, comprehensive system of popular instruction. By the Constitution it is decreed that public education is to be gratuitous and compulsory; this provision, unlike many others of a similar kind, has been carried substantially into practice. In every town, village, and hamlet throughout the principality there are nowadays a school-house and a school teacher. In the towns the school buildings are generally the handsomest edifice to be seen there, and in the villages the school-house is the cleanest of the cottages. The cost of providing the school-house, of paying the teachers, and of supplying the books and other implements of tuition, is provided partly by the State and partly by the municipalities in the towns, or by the communal authorities in the villages. The Sobranje votes every year a grant for education, which in this year's Budget amounted to somewhat over £350,000, or about one-seventh of the whole public expenditure. Out of this grant there is defrayed the cost of the salaries of the Education Department, of the Public Inspectors, and, I believe, of the high school of Sofia. The balance, after the above expenses have been met, is divided between the different town and village schools, the State in each instance paying half the estimated annual cost, and the local authorities supplying the other half out of the local revenues. The Government has the right to insist upon the amount raised in these ways being sufficient to provide adequate schooling for

each locality. This right, however, has seldom to be exercised, as popular opinion is so much in favour of education that hitherto little or no difficulty has been experienced in raising adequate contributions from the municipalities and communes. In the village schools there are no fees of any kind ; in the upper schools the wealthier parents are required to subscribe sixteen shillings a head annually for each of their children at school, these subscriptions being employed to create a fund for the establishment of school libraries, for which no provision is made by the general grant. Compulsory attendance has not encountered here anything like the opposition it has met with in our own country. From eight to twelve every child is compelled to attend the primary schools, where reading, writing, and ciphering are the chief subjects taught. After that age school attendance is not compulsory ; but the children, if their parents wish it, are allowed to attend the high schools for six years, so that the whole period of education extends over ten years. The funds for the high schools are provided in the same manner as for the primary schools, and the education imparted is entirely gratuitous, save for the small subscriptions to which I have already referred. As the Bulgarians live almost entirely in villages, and as isolated cottages are almost unknown, the elementary schools are universally accessible. I believe, however, that in the out-of-the-way districts there are not yet a sufficient number of high schools for the requirements of the population ; the number, however, of these high schools is being yearly increased, and the increase would have been far more rapid if it had not been for the great difficulty in finding competent teachers. In a few years

the high schools are expected to turn out an ample supply of trained schoolmasters and schoolmistresses; and then every Bulgarian child, or, at any rate, every Bulgarian boy, will have the opportunity, if their parents are so minded, of acquiring, what seems to me, a very thorough course of instruction at the public cost. All the schools, I may add, are day schools.

In the towns there are a few teachers who give private instruction in foreign languages; but there may fairly be said to be no private schools. It follows that the whole education of the country is practically provided by the State schools. Americans are proud, and very justly proud, of their common school system; but as the United States have grown in wealth, and as the social distinctions which accompany wealth have developed in the Republic of the West, the children of well-to-do Americans are brought up more and more in private schools. Probably the same change will occur in Bulgaria when the same causes begin to operate. For the present, however, and for many years to come, the whole population of Bulgaria must be educated in the State schools. The children of professional men, tradesmen, and peasants receive exactly the same education, in the same schools, and pass their years of learning sitting on the same benches, studying the same lessons, and playing the same games. This system must tend to perpetuate the absolute equality between all classes which now prevails in Bulgaria to a far greater extent than in the United States, or indeed in any civilized community I have ever heard of, either in the Old World or the New.

Some years ago, when I was travelling in America, I was always invited, by any acquaintances I might have

in the towns I visited, to visit their cemetery and their common school. Happily the sort of ghoulish taste for graveyards, which is so universal amidst the Trans-atlantic branch of the Anglo-Saxon race, does not prevail in Bulgaria; and I fancy that the popular Bulgarian sentiment on the subject of burial-grounds very closely resembles that of the Moslem, namely, that a cemetery is a resort for the dead and not for the living. Anyhow in Bulgaria I never found myself expected to visit the cemeteries, but I was everywhere solicited to visit the educational establishments. The public schools of Philip-popolis, of which I saw most, are reckoned some of the best in Bulgaria; and if, as I was assured by competent judges, they are fair specimens of the general run of the high schools throughout the country, the Bulgarians are certainly to be congratulated on the success of their scholastic experiment. The boys' school is located in a very spacious, handsome building, which was built for the purpose at a cost of some £20,000, and which, in respect of class-rooms, galleries, and lecture-halls, is admirably adapted for the objects of an educational institution. The whole building was scrupulously clean; the rooms were well ventilated, cheerful, and commodious. There are six classes in the school, and each pupil is expected to rise from a lower to an upper class during each year of his sexennial curriculum. If he fails to qualify himself for the class next above his own during two successive years he is dismissed from the school as incapable of learning. The hours of study are from eight in the morning to midday, and from two to four in the afternoon. If, however, the parents can show valid cause for requiring the services of their children at home, the

pupils are excused from afternoon attendance. The summer holidays are so arranged as to cover the period of the harvest, and thus to enable the boys to assist in the chief farming operations of the year.

The first class in the high schools is occupied with testing and, if necessary, completing the elementary education that the pupils have received in the elementary schools. The highest class embraces the study of chemistry, conic sections, the differential calculus, and political economy. There is no instruction given in dead or foreign languages. In the intermediate classes between the first and last, the pupils pass through the various stages of education in such studies as mathematics, history, geography, astronomy, and general science. Of course, when you have to communicate by the aid of an interpreter, it is not easy to ascertain what degree of learning the pupils have actually acquired. But, judging from the diagrams, maps, models, and text-books which I saw in use, the instruction imparted was certainly of a higher and more serious character than that given in any ordinary public school of our own country. The boys appeared to me to follow the explanations of their teachers with extreme attention and interest, and had none of the listless, bored look, which, if my recollection serves me rightly, used to be—and I dare say is—so characteristic of English school-boys in a class-room. The teachers seem to take great interest in their pupils, and were obviously most anxious to impress a stranger with the extent of their scholars' attainments. They all declared that the children, as a general rule, were anxious to learn, and quick at learning. Any religious difficulty is got over by allowing the children of different sects to receive

religious instruction in separate class-rooms, imparted by ministers of their own creed. As the building has any amount of space, and as there are only four important schismatic denominations — the Orthodox Greeks, the Catholics, the Mahommedans, and the Jews—there is no difficulty about finding separate accommodation for the purpose. The religious teaching is always given, either at the commencement or at the end of the day's lessons, so as to leave the regular school work uninterrupted. From what I could learn, no very great importance is attached by the parents to religious instruction being given one way or the other, so long as no attempt at proselytizing is made or suspected of being made. The boys themselves, in common with all Bulgarian lads, were strong, stout-built fellows, not unintelligent in look, but with a sort of peasant aspect, which characterizes the whole race. Morally, though I am bound to say not materially, they were one and all redolent of the soil. In the play-ground they were taking lessons in drilling while I was visiting the school, and I was struck with the regularity of their movements, as well as with their likeness to the soldiers of the Bulgarian army, who always remind me of ploughboys in uniform, brave, doubtless, strong, and active, and yet with little or no pretence to what the French call the *tenue militaire*. The professors are, without an exception, Bulgarians who have received their education either at Robert College, Constantinople, or in Roumania, Austria, France, and Russia. One of them had been a student in the Applied Sciences Department of King's College, London, and spoke English admirably. But the majority, I should say, had little knowledge of any language other than

those common to most Bulgarians. It should, however, be remembered that the knowledge of Bulgarian gives a man of education complete command of Russian literature. At the ordinary elementary schools the salaries paid to the masters are liberal, according to the Bulgarian standard, varying as they do from fifty to eighty pounds a year; but the professors in the high schools are comparatively poorly remunerated, the highest salary being two hundred pounds. As far as I could learn, they have little opportunity of adding to their incomes by giving private lessons out of school hours. Still, the present system works so satisfactorily that even parents who could afford the expense of sending their children to be educated abroad now keep them at home, unless they wish their education in some special branch to be carried beyond the limits provided by the high schools. In Bulgaria there is a great prejudice against the importation of professors and teachers from abroad whenever this can possibly be avoided. At present the class of educated Bulgarians who could adequately fill the professorial chairs of a degree-granting University is so small as to be practically non-existent. It is hoped, however, that as soon as the crack pupils of the native gymnasiums have completed their special studies in foreign lands, it may be possible to found native universities under native tuition; in that event, the present high school of Philippopolis will probably be converted into a university.

The girls' school, though inferior in accommodation and internal arrangements to the boys' gymnasium, is a solid, comfortable building. The class of instruction given is very much the same in both schools, but at the former it does not extend nearly so far as in the latter, and far

less attention is devoted to abstract studies. All I can say is that I visited several class-rooms in which the girls wrote very well from dictation, and worked out a number of difficult sums with great readiness and accuracy. With the exception of music, accomplishments form no part of the feminine course of study. The teachers were of the ordinary schoolmistress type, but looked intelligent, patient, and painstaking. I noticed, both among boys and girls, the curious indifference with which the presence of strangers was regarded. In any English school, the sudden entry of a group of foreigners, who were treated as visitors of distinction, would have caused any amount of whispering and nudging amongst the boys, and of giggling and glancing amidst the girls. But here the scholars of both sexes appeared to pay no attention to the interruption of their lessons, and went on quietly and stolidly with their tasks, just as if nothing exceptional had happened. The oldest girls' class I visited consisted of pupils between fifteen and seventeen, who were going through an examination in the history of the Crusades. There were some fifty girls in this classroom, and at the age of sweet seventeen it is difficult for any girl not to have some charm of look or manner. I was told by one of the teachers that the girls were very anxious to get on at school, as the successful pupils were in great demand as wives for the officers of the Bulgarian army. If so, I trust I may say, without lack of courtesy, that the Bulgarian officers display a preference for intellectual as compared with physical charms, which is not common amongst military men in other countries.

Altogether, the system of instruction imparted at the public schools seem to me very sound and very efficient.

The only complaint I heard from the professors was that the boys were at times extremely insubordinate and difficult to manage, and that if they did not like a teacher, they would pay no attention to his teaching. Only two or three years ago there was a barring out at the boys' school in Philippopolis. The masters were forcibly excluded from the building, and, on trying to force their way in, were driven back by their pupils, armed with sticks and knives. Order was not restored until the services of the troops had been called into requisition. The masters attributed these acts of insubordination partly to want of tact in some of the then professors, and still more to the bad influence of the local newspapers, which had filled the boys' heads with all sorts of crude, Socialist, and Nihilist ideas.

What truth there may be in this explanation I have no means of saying; but I think the extent to which public education is now carried in Bulgaria is not without danger to the State. To my mind it is utterly impossible to imagine that the young lads who, year after year, are leaving these high schools with a far better education, in as far as book-learning is concerned, than nineteen middle-class young Englishmen out of twenty, will be content to go back to their homes, till their small farms, and lead the same lives of hard-working penury as their fathers led before them. It is only a few, after all, of the boys brought up in the high schools who can become pupil-teachers in the elementary schools. The Bulgarian Church offers little attraction to men of education. Trade and industry are as yet so little developed that young and intelligent men cannot hope to find the employments in professional and mercantile pursuits they would naturally turn to in more

advanced communities. Practically, all that a clever educated Bulgarian lad has to look to as the reward of his studies upon leaving school, is the attainment of some post in the public service; the best way to obtain such posts is to engage in political agitation. There is, therefore, a strong probability of Bulgaria's becoming inundated with professional politicians. The example of Greece is sufficient to show the evils inseparable from a state of things under which political agitation is the best, if not the sole, pursuit by which men can hope to earn a livelihood on the strength of their education. The danger, however, of this state of things is fully recognized by many of the leading Bulgarian statesmen; and the good sense of the community may, there is reason to hope, provide a remedy against the growing evil. Already there is some talk of rendering the education provided at the high schools no longer gratuitous, and of compelling parents who desire a higher education for their children than that imparted at the primary schools, to pay a material part of the expense of secondary education. There is talk, too, of suppressing the grants provided by the State, out of which children of needy parents are supplied with the funds required to pursue their studies at the high schools. The real remedy, however, for this evil, whose existence is almost universally admitted, is the extension of local trade and local industry. It seems to me, therefore, that the system of education now established throughout the principality, excellent as it is, must lead, as a necessary corollary, to the introduction of foreign capital, without which there is no possibility of local trade and industry being developed for a considerable time to come.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PUBLIC SERVICE.

IN as far as my experience goes, the condition of the public service is about the best test of the real advance made by any country towards civilized life. Wherever the general run of the administrators are active, painstaking, and honest, the country is in a good way and making progress; wherever the administrators are, as a body, indolent, indifferent to their duty, and corrupt, the country is in a bad way and going backwards. Holding this view, one of my chief endeavours during my visit to Bulgaria was to ascertain how far the public service deserved to rank in the former or the latter category.

The class of Bulgarians with whom I came most directly into contact were the officials of the public service; and as to their possession of the two first of the three qualities I have enumerated as requisite, I can testify to a considerable extent from my own observation. Almost all the officials I made acquaintance with spoke more or less of foreign languages—more, I noticed, of French than of German; and one and all were willing and anxious to give a stranger a good impression of their country. They had mostly been educated at Robert College, or in the capitals of the West; there were very few who had not resided for some time in foreign countries. The

number of what one would call highly educated men amidst the official class seemed to be limited; the number of fairly well educated was, however, very large; their education, as I gathered, having been mainly confined to the special studies which they had been sent abroad to learn. That this must be so is obvious enough. In the first place, the Bulgarians have not reached the stage of civilization in which the need of general, as distinguished from special, culture is either felt or supplied; in the second place, the national character is not that of a race addicted to intellectual pursuits or abstract studies; and, what is more than all, the students, whom Bulgaria has hitherto sent abroad to finish their education, are, with scarcely an exception, the sons of peasants who have expended their hard-earned savings to make them doctors, lawyers, engineers, as the case might be, not men of general culture and high education. The officials of whom I speak were sent abroad for some special object, and, as a rule, they returned home having achieved that object, and that object only. All persons I have met, who have had opportunities of watching the progress of Bulgarian students abroad, are agreed as to their great power of application, their extreme desire to learn, and their marked aptitude in mastering any special study to which they turn their attention. To rise into the public service is the great ambition of all Bulgarians, and the first wish of every Bulgarian—subject only to his passion for increasing the acreage of his land—is to get employment under Government, and, having got it, to make it a stepping-stone to further advancement. Thus it may be assumed, even if the assumption were not confirmed by observation, that the Bulgarian officials, as a class, are active and painstaking.

It is not so easy to speak with certainty as to their possession of the third qualification, that of honesty. The difficulty of forming an opinion on this point is increased by the fact that every traveller, who keeps his ears open, will hear entirely different accounts from residents in the country, who are alike entitled to speak with some authority on the matter in dispute.

The Bulgarians are not a people to whom the art of making themselves sympathetic to foreigners comes readily. They have little or nothing of the suppleness of mind, the quickness of adopting foreign modes of expression or turns of thought, which are characteristic of other Sclav nations. They do not possess also the instinctive good breeding, the semblance, if not the reality of self-respect, which centuries of domination as a master race have conferred upon the Turks. For this, and for other reasons to which I have alluded elsewhere, they are seldom personally congenial to strangers whose lot causes them to dwell in their land. When individuals or races are not congenial to you, it is only in human nature you should take a somewhat unfavourable view of their character. A considerable rebate, therefore, must be made from the estimates of foreigners, who abuse the country and the people on the ground that, as old residents, they have a right to form their own opinion. With the general issue, whether the Bulgarians are or are not an attractive race, I am not much concerned. I have lived long enough abroad to realize the opinion which foreigners hold about our own claim to amiability; and I am fully aware that the racial qualities, which command respect, are certainly not those which inspire affection. Nations, as well as persons, are, I am convinced, more liked for their failings than for their

virtue. When, however, I endeavoured to analyze the general indictment brought against the Bulgarians by their detractors, I found it, in the main, to amount to this: that their courts were dilatory unless the suitor paid, in some form or other, for expedition, and that the public officials grew rich upon small salaries. To a certain extent, the charges in question may be true; but even admitting their truth, it by no means follows logically that either the judges or the officials are corrupt and venal.

The truth is that in this, as in so many other matters, we English people are accustomed to judge foreign nations by a standard of our own, which may be much better than their standard, but which, whether good or bad, is certainly not their standard. We pay our public servants very high salaries. Happily for us, we place at the head of our public offices—or have placed hitherto—men of birth and station, and generally possessed of means of their own, independent of their salaries, and thus we have created an *esprit de corps* in our judicial and official services, which causes every member of these bodies to regard any departure from the social code of English gentlemen as a personal and individual disgrace. When County and Parish Councils have fallen, as they infallibly must fall, into the hands of a class trained in a harder school and imbued with different ideas of the fitness of things, we shall find in our turn that government for the people by the people implies that the people who do govern consider it their right and due to get something for themselves out of the people who are governed. The man in the fustian coat and corduroys may be at heart as honest as the man who rides in his own carriage and has been brought up at public schools and universities. The only difference between the two is that a five-pound note

is a temptation to the former in a sense in which it is not a temptation to the latter. This is all the difference; but the difference counts for much. Some years ago I had occasion to make inquiries of a small North-country tradesman—who by industry and economy had made a little money and had got elected upon the vestry of his parish—as to the price at which his premises were rated. I was not surprised to find that they were rated very much below, not only their real value, but below that at which his neighbours' houses were assessed. On asking for an explanation, his answer was, "I should be a fool, and the "whole parish would call me a fool, if, being on the vestry, "I did not get my rates assessed lower than those of my "neighbours." The man, as I had good reason to know, was honest and fair-dealing in all the ordinary relations of life; but I might as well have tried to explain the binomial theorem to him as have endeavoured to convince him that a vestryman ought not to use his official position in order to get his own rates reduced to his own advantage. Human nature is the same in Bulgaria as in Yorkshire; and peasants are peasants all the world over.

It is, however, a mistake to suppose that because a Bulgarian public servant may do things a high-minded English official would not dream of doing, he is therefore, necessarily, corrupt. I had occasion some years ago, in the Transvaal, to have to study the same problem as that presented to me in Bulgaria. In the former country I was told on every side that the Boer politicians were all dishonest, devoid of principle, and open to bribery; in confirmation of this charge, my informants pointed to the notorious fact that there was hardly a public man in the country who, out of miserably small salaries, had not

somehow amassed a fortune out of all proportion to his legitimate earnings. Yet my own experience, and that of friends far better able to form an opinion on the subject, convinced me that the Boer Ministers and officials were utterly unamenable to corrupt influences in as far as the interests, according to their own lights, of their country were concerned; that in private transactions their words could be trusted; and that, in the ordinary sense of the word honesty, they were honest men. The explanation I came to was, that their standard of public honesty was not the same as our own. Like my friend the Yorkshire vestryman, the public servants of the Transvaal considered that, as long as they did their duty to the State, they had a right to put something into their own pockets; and their fellow-Boers, like the vestryman's neighbours, thought none the worse of them for so doing. To pay large salaries to State servants is a thing abhorrent to the peasant mind; but that the recipients of these salaries should eke them out by commissions, earned for the discharge of their public duty, seems to the peasant—so long as these commissions are not paid directly out of his own pocket—not only a natural but a praiseworthy proceeding.

I suspect a similar state of public sentiment prevails in Bulgaria. Even the influence of so popular and powerful a Minister as M. Stambouloff could not induce the Sobranje to vote official salaries on any other than a very meagre scale, but his public influence would not be in the least impaired by the knowledge that as a Minister he took care to have some share allotted to him in the profit made by the persons to whom he gave concessions in the public interest. This is what every member of the Sobranje would probably do himself, under similar circumstances,

and would certainly see little or no harm in doing. Anyhow the fact of a Minister's having taken commissions for work done in the public service would not shake the belief of his fellow-countrymen, that the vital interests of the country were absolutely safe in his keeping. In much the same way, the knowledge that judicial proceedings had been expedited by the reception of a present on the part of the presiding judges would not impair popular faith in the justice of the decision at which the court might ultimately arrive.

It is only fair to the Bulgarian public service to say here that I found no reliable evidence as to the truth of the latter imputation to which I refer. On the contrary, many foreigners, who seem to be most competent to form an independent opinion, assured me that they would willingly entrust their interests to the arbitrament of the native courts. Still, the imputations in question are made so confidently in many quarters, that, in endeavouring to give a picture of the Peasant State, it is unfair to leave without comment the charge most commonly brought against it by its detractors. All I contend for is, that even admitting the charge to be more or less founded, it does not follow that public officials in Bulgaria are venal. To argue that because a public servant in Bulgaria may not be indifferent to the advantages of a commission, he is therefore prepared to sell the interests of his country or to pervert the course of justice, is to betray an utter ignorance of human nature in general, and of peasant nature in particular. Let me also add here, that one of the things which surprised me most in a country which had for centuries been subject to Turkish rule, was to find that not only the word "backscheesh" was unheard, but the thing itself

was unknown in common life. The Bulgarian peasant will probably overcharge you, if he can, and will certainly try to get the best of any bargain he may conclude with you. But to ask you for "backscheesh," over and above the price agreed upon, is foreign to his custom and to his nature. In this, as in many other matters, the Bulgarian, though in the East, is not of the East, Eastern.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ARMY.

One might naturally expect that in a State, such as Bulgaria, a large standing army in times of peace would be popularly regarded as an unnecessary luxury and an uncalled-for burden. So far is this from being the case, that the military expenditure is voted more willingly by the Sobranje, and with less criticism, than the grants required for any other department of the public service. The War Office, with the full sanction of the Sobranje, habitually appropriates for its own use some part of the grants voted for other services, in the not unfrequent event of the amount assigned to any department being found to be in excess of its actual requirements.

I do not think, however, that this readiness to acquiesce in military expenditure can be accounted for by the hypothesis that the Bulgarians are essentially a warlike nation. They make good soldiers, as the event has shown; but soldiering, as a pursuit, is not one which commends itself readily to the instincts of peasant population. The cause of this apparent anomaly is not far to seek. The maintenance of an army greatly in excess of the normal needs of the country is, from a national point of view, a matter of necessity. The Bulgarians are intensely jealous of their independence, and almost extravagantly proud of

their distinct nationality. They are not simple enough to suppose that any force they could possibly muster would enable them to resist their annexation by Russia, supposing the latter Power made up her mind to annex Bulgaria at the risk of war, and supposing the other European Powers acquiesced in her annexation. But they are convinced that so long as they can keep up a strong military force of their own, Russia is much less likely to attack their independence, and the Western Powers are much more likely, in case of need, to come to their assistance. All the public men I have spoken to on the subject regard any direct armed attack on the part of Russia as a very improbable contingency. What they fear is some indirect attack, instigated, if not supported, from St. Petersburg. Supposing there was any decline in the efficiency of Bulgaria as a fighting power, Servia, under pressure from St. Petersburg, might—and it is believed would—renew her attempt to invade the Principality. Bulgaria would also be unable, without a powerful army, to protect and claim as her own, in the possible event of a rising against Turkish rule taking place in Macedonia, the large district occupied by men of her own race south of the Turkish frontier. On this account, the statesmen of Bulgaria regard the maintenance of an effective standing army as a matter of paramount necessity; and this view commends itself to the good sense and patriotic spirit of their fellow-countrymen.

Moreover, the internal organization of the army, as at present constituted, is in complete harmony with the ideas of a Peasant State, in which there is no difference of class and very little difference of wealth. Every citizen of the State, not physically incapacitated, is liable to compulsory

military service on attaining the age of twenty. Every year there are about forty thousand Bulgarian youths who come under this category. But in times of peace, only about two-fifths of this number are actually called under arms. The choice, whether a lad serves or not, is decided by the chance of the conscription, and the balloting for military service is conducted with perfect fairness. The conscripts serve, either for two years in the infantry, or for three years in the cavalry. Up to the age, however, of forty-five, every soldier who has served in the army belongs to the reserves, and may be called upon at any time to rejoin the ranks under certain specified contingencies. Since the Servian War there have been, on the average, thirty to forty thousand Bulgarians actually under arms. As about half that number quit the ranks annually, and as mortality is not great amidst strong, healthy men between twenty and thirty, the probabilities are that Bulgaria must now possess some seventy thousand trained soldiers in the reserve. I was assured that, if the necessity should arrive, Bulgaria could at once mobilize an army of one hundred thousand men, well provided with arms, ammunition, and means of transport, and ready to take the field at very brief notice. The existence of such a force enables her to view without alarm any possible complication which does not form an incident in a general European war.

The Bulgarian soldiery can never be called upon to serve out of their own country except in time of war. In consequence, they are not separated for long periods of time from their homes and families in the same way as the troops of States which have colonies or outlying possessions. Military service here is essentially a home service ; and the only valid objection to a large army, from

a popular point of view, is the necessity it involves of restricting the supply of the labour available for the cultivation of the land, in which, either in his own person, or as a member of a family, every Bulgarian soldier is individually interested. The men are well fed, well clothed, and well housed ; and dull as the Bulgarian towns, in which the troops are mostly quartered, may seem to strangers, they probably present great attractions to peasants whose lives have been passed hitherto in out-of-the-way villages.

Promotion is absolutely equal for all ranks and classes in the Bulgarian army. Any youth who has gone through his curriculum at the high schools, and who has risen into the upper class before leaving, has a right to enter the Military Academy at Sofia as a cadet ; and after studying there for two years and passing a satisfactory examination, he is entitled to a commission. At the same time, any private soldier who has served for two years in the ranks, and who can pass the examination demanded of the cadets, is equally entitled to an officer's appointment. From the nature of things, I presume that the cadets are, as a rule, sons of peasants somewhat better off than the mass of their fellow-countrymen. But the differences of fortune are so slight here, all classes are so equally removed from either wealth or poverty, that officers and privates do not represent different social strata, as they do in almost all other armies. Since the Russian officers were recalled on the eve of the Servian War, the army, with hardly an exception, has been officered by native-born Bulgarians ; that is, in the vast majority of instances, by the sons of peasants. The pay of the officers is liberal and, according to a Bulgarian standard, even lavish. For instance, a sub-lieutenant receives £100 a year, a captain

£200, a major £300, and a colonel close on £500. The military salaries are, in every case, relatively higher than those paid to civil servants occupying analogous positions. The possibility of rising from the ranks and obtaining a commission is undoubtedly a great attraction to the recruits upon their joining the army. The saying that every French soldier carried a field-marshal's baton in his knapsack is one of those empty declarations to which the Gallic nature is so addicted. But it may be said with perfect truth, that every Bulgarian private, if he is intelligent, hard-working, and steady, and has made good use of his school education, is well-nigh certain of obtaining a commission, carrying with it not only social distinction, but a salary which, in his eyes, means comfort as well as competence.

There is perfect equality among the services. The only body of troops which enjoys any sort of exceptional privileges consists in a small *corps d'élite* which supplies the escorts for the Prince and the guards for the palace. These privileges, however, consist in the members of the corps being somewhat better equipped, better clad, and better mounted than their fellow-soldiers. Otherwise, they serve under the same conditions and are composed of the same class as the regiments of the line.

The military efficiency of the Bulgarian army is a point concerning which one must rely mainly on professional opinion. These opinions have been almost invariably favourable. All I can say from personal observation is, that the Bulgarian soldiery are strong, powerful men, that they are drilling all day long, and that, in common with their countrymen, they look good-humoured and contented. A quieter, better-conducted body of troops it is difficult to imagine. I have never, either by day or night, seen a

Bulgarian soldier drunk or quarrelsome, or even noisy in the streets. To my mind, they do not march with much swing or go, but they cover a great deal of ground without fatigue. They are very fond of singing while on the march. Officers and men appear to be on very friendly and familiar terms, though the etiquette of military service in such matters as saluting is most strictly observed. There is nothing of the swagger, so common in the armies of France, Germany, and Russia, to be noticed amidst the Bulgarian soldiery. They are not, as yet, in any sense a caste apart; they are Bulgarians, peasants for the most part, who wear serge uniforms instead of woollen sheepskins. That is the only difference.

There are many obvious advantages in this national character of the national army. Still, I am told by persons not unfriendly to the country, that the homogeneity—to use a long word—of the Bulgarian army is, politically speaking, a disadvantage. Apart from their superior military education, the officers are of much the same social standing as the men, sharing the same ideas, interests, and prejudices. From the colonel to the private they are peasants in uniform, trained to the use of arms, and united by a common discipline. This fact may increase the efficiency of the army in time of war, but it also increases their power as a political element in time of peace. The officers, indeed, are forbidden to interfere in any way with politics; it is difficult, however, to see how this prohibition can be enforced in periods of political excitement, in a country where officers and men speak the same language, belong to the same class, and are governed by the same influences. In a last resort, the Government has to rely upon the army, not only for the defence of the

country, but for the maintenance of its home authority; and supposing the army to be dissatisfied, rightly or wrongly, with the policy of the Government, the consequences might be serious. During the height of the recent public agitation, caused by the closing of the Bulgarian schools in Macedonia, the Government might have found it necessary, in the interest of the State, to suppress by force the popular manifestations which were then taking place all over the country; in such a contingency, it is not quite certain whether they could have relied on the army to carry out their instructions. This danger has been removed by the Porte having given way and having revoked the edict which created such indignation in Bulgaria. Similar difficulties, however, may easily arise; and then the fact of the Bulgarian army being the realization of the democratic military ideal—that is, of its being simply and solely the Bulgarian people under arms—may possibly prove perilous. It struck me somewhat unpleasantly, during the period of which I speak, to hear it said on every side, that the success of Stambouloff's policy, in obtaining the withdrawal of the obnoxious decree, would enable the Government to dismiss the Minister of War, whose dismissal, for private reasons into which I need not enter here, had become a political necessity, without incurring the risk of thereby exciting dissatisfaction in the army. The danger of the army's becoming a political power would be far less serious if there was any considerable number of foreign officers in the Bulgarian service. But in this, as in all other matters, the intense popular dislike to the introduction of any foreign element stands in the way of the Government's availing itself of the assistance of foreigners.

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEASANT STATE.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CONSTITUTION.

I KNOW of few more curious documents than the Constitution of Bulgaria. It was drawn up, nominally, by the Constituent Assembly held at Tirnova in 1877, after the State had been liberated by Russia, and before Prince Alexander had been declared the ruler of the new principality. I should doubt whether, at that period, there were any considerable number, amidst the delegates of the emancipated peasantry, who were capable of devising a Constitution, or had any definite idea of what was meant by Parliamentary institutions. But even if the members of the Sobranje had all been apt pupils of the Abbé Siéyès, it would have made very little difference. In those days the fate of Bulgaria lay absolutely and entirely in the hands of Russia. If it had pleased the Czar to declare that, in his opinion, a republic or an absolute monarchy, instead of a constitutional kingdom, was the form of government best suited to Bulgaria, his recommendation would have sufficed to carry the day. So long as the new order of things terminated their subjection to Ottoman rule, and preserved the semblance of autonomy, the Bulgarians were well satisfied to leave

the decision of what that order should be to their liberator and protector. Even if they had not been so satisfied, they would have had no choice except to take whatever institutions were provided for them from St. Petersburg.

Anyhow, the Constitution, as it exists, was the work of Russia. This fact accounts, to my thinking, for the singularity of the charter. The impression left on one's mind by its perusal is that the charter must be the joint composition of two authors—the one an admirer of autocratic government, the other a partisan of unbridled democracy; and that these authors, being unable to agree on any common scheme, had compromised matters by arranging that each in turn should contribute alternate clauses. The preamble states that the Principality of Bulgaria is to be an hereditary and constitutional monarchy with a national Parliament. The clauses defining the respective attributions of the sovereign and the Parliament are drawn up, in the former case, on the most autocratic principles; in the latter case, in accordance with extreme democratic ideas. The position assigned by the Constitution to the monarch may be summarized as follows:—

No laws passed by the Parliament are valid without the sanction of the Prince. By right of his office he is chief of the army, and has the absolute power of appointing or dismissing all officers in the service. In the same way the Ministers are nominated by him, and may be deprived of their post at his good will and pleasure. They are not necessarily members of the Sobranje, though they have the right of taking part in the debates; and their tenure of office is independent of the issue, whether they do or do not possess the confidence of a Parliamentary majority. Every decree emanating from the Prince and

countersigned by his Ministers is binding on the executive.

On the other hand, the attributes of the Parliament under the charter are almost co-extensive with the powers of the Prince. Universal manhood suffrage is declared to be the law of the land. Every Bulgarian male citizen who has attained the age of twenty-one, and is in possession of his civil rights, is entitled to vote. All citizens of thirty years of age, who are able to read and write, are eligible as representatives. According to the original Constitution there was to be one deputy for every ten thousand souls throughout the Principality; by a subsequent change, however, there is only now one deputy for every twenty thousand electors. The members of the Sobranje are guaranteed absolute freedom of speech, and are not liable to arrest or trial during the session of Parliament without the previous consent of the Chamber. No provision of any kind is made for a Second Chamber. The deliberations of the Sobranje are open to the public; and no military force is allowed to be stationed in or near their place of assembly. The Parliament thus constituted possesses absolute authority to pass laws, to impose taxes, to provide the funds required for the administration of the State, either by loans or by taxation, and to discuss and modify the Budget. No provision is made, on the one hand, for the contingency of the Prince refusing to sanction the laws passed by the Sobranje; or, on the other hand, for the eventuality of the Sobranje refusing to provide the funds demanded by the executive as necessary for the service of the State. The Prince has the right of dissolving the Assembly, and ordering fresh elections whenever he thinks proper; but if the new

Sobranje should persist in the policy which caused the dissolution of its predecessor, the Prince is under no legal obligation to withdraw his opposition. There are, in fact, two kings in Bulgaria, as there were in Brentford. These kings are the Prince and the Sobranje. In the contingency of their disagreement a dead-lock must arise, for whose solution no mechanism has been devised or apparently contemplated by the framework of the Constitution.

The current interpretation of this strange omission is that it was not accidental, but intentional. The object of Prince Donderkoff, and of the fellow-officials who assisted him in drawing up the Constitution, was to devise a scheme under which Russian influence must of necessity remain supreme in Bulgaria. It was expected at St. Petersburg that the reigning Prince, whoever he might be, would be a mere creature of Russia ; and on the strength of this idea he was entrusted with powers so ample as to place the whole administration of the country entirely in his hands. But to guard against the eventuality of his not proving as subservient to Russia as was anticipated, he was handicapped by the institution of a Parliament, elected on the most democratic basis, and possessed of complete and independent control over the finances of the State. Thus, if the Prince were to make difficulties in carrying out the policy recommended from St. Petersburg, he could always, it was imagined, be brought to reason by the pressure of the National Assembly acting, as it was reasonable to suppose it would act, under the influence of Russia. The scheme was ingenious, and would probably have proved successful if the fatuous policy of the Russians in Bulgaria had not contrived to

unite both the Prince and the Assembly in a common hostility to their Muscovite protectors.

Within little more than two years after Prince Alexander's accession, the conflict of jurisdictions, to which I have alluded, made itself manifest. M. Zankoff and his colleagues, the then Ministers of the State, were extreme partisans and almost avowed agents of Russia; and in that capacity they proposed measures which the Prince considered injurious to the interests of the country. The actual causes of the dissensions between the Prince and his Ministers are not very intelligible at this distance of time. It is certain, however, that Prince Alexander came, rightly or wrongly, to the conclusion that his Ministers were determined to thwart his own policy in every way, and that, in the event of his dissolving the Sobranje, any elections held under the control of the then Ministry would, as a matter of course, return a majority of their nominees. He therefore dismissed his Ministers, and issued a proclamation convoking the Grand Sobranje. In the same proclamation he informed his people that he felt it his duty to abdicate, unless the Assembly should agree to suspend the Constitution for seven years, and to allow him during this period to govern the country without a Parliament. His action may have been unwise, but it was not in excess of the powers conferred on him by the Constitution. The elections, which were held under an executive composed of his supporters, returned a majority hostile to the late Ministry. Thereupon the Grand Sobranje agreed to accept the terms on which alone the Prince professed himself ready to retain the throne. Owing, however, to strong pressure which was brought to bear upon him from

Russia, the Prince gave way within a few months of the extraordinary powers which he had demanded being conferred upon him, and consented to the re-establishment of the original Constitution. Since then there has been no recurrence of this constitutional difficulty. That this has been so is due partly to the fact that the reigning Prince has shown more good sense and judgment than his predecessor; partly to the political ability of the statesmen who have held office under Prince Ferdinand; but, above all, to the accident that, of late years, both the Prince and the Sobranje have had a common interest in avoiding any collision which might furnish an excuse for Russian intervention. The difficulty, however, still exists, though for the present it remains latent.

The other provisions of the Constitution have no great interest for the outer world. A number of the clauses are concerned with the establishment of a Grand Sobranje, which is to be elected by the same constituencies as those which return the ordinary Sobranje, but which is to consist of double the number of representatives. This extraordinary assembly is to be convoked when questions have to be decided, having reference to the acquisition or cession of national territory, to any change in the Constitution, to a vacancy in the throne, and to the appointment of a regency. As soon as the questions submitted to this body have been decided by vote one way or the other, its functions are at an end.

A number of more or less abstract principles are also affirmed in the charter, which seem to have been introduced into this document rather for the purpose of satisfying public opinion abroad than of meeting any immediate home demand. The Press is declared to be absolutely

free, the right of public meeting is guaranteed, and the establishment of any kind of censorship is declared illegal. All religious denominations are secured perfect liberty of worship so long as the practice of their creed is not inconsistent with the law. No difference between one class and another is to be permitted in respect of their legal status. All titles of nobility, and all decorations of any kind, are pronounced to be inconsistent with the fundamental laws of the realm. Slavery and the slave-trade are prohibited; and all slaves, whatever their sex, nationality, or creed, are to become free on setting foot on Bulgarian soil. The right of property is proclaimed inviolable, and it is expressly asserted that no private property can be expropriated by the State without adequate compensation. Torture and confiscation of property are forbidden; and the secrecy of letters and telegrams is affirmed to be a matter of universal necessity. All these general principles are declared subject to the terms of laws to be enacted later. In some cases, the laws bearing on these subjects have not yet been formulated. Up to the present, however, the tendency of all Bulgarian legislation has been in conformity with the principles recited in the fundamental charter.

The Prince has an income of £24,000 a year guaranteed him by the Constitution. This income cannot be increased except by the vote of the Sobranje, or reduced without his own consent. The Salic law regulates the succession to the throne. The Prince and his heirs are not permitted to profess any other religion than the orthodox Greek faith; but an exception is made in favour of any prince who happens, at the time of his election, to belong to any other religious communion. The orthodox Christian faith

of the Eastern rite is proclaimed to be the State religion; and the authority of the Holy Synod, in all spiritual matters, is recognized as paramount. Universal military service is made incumbent on all Bulgarian male subjects, irrespective of race or creed; but the precise terms of army service are left to be determined by future legislation. Primary education is also declared to be compulsory and gratuitous.

Such are the principal provisions of this curious charter. With the grave exception I have referred to above, this draft Constitution—framed as it was, necessarily, in extreme haste, and with a very imperfect knowledge of the true conditions of the country—forms a not inadequate charter of Bulgarian liberties. On the whole, it has worked well; the country at large has, apparently, no desire for any fundamental change in its provisions.

Last year a meeting of the Grand Sobranje was held at Tirnova. At this session, the title of the reigning Prince was altered from Highness to Royal Highness; and, in view of his then impending marriage, it was further decreed that, if he had a son and heir, the young Prince might be educated in the Catholic faith, the religion of his parents, without vitiating in any way his right of succession to the throne.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PRINCE.

AMONGST the many strange vicissitudes which Bulgaria has experienced during her chequered fortunes, not the least strange is the fact that the Sovereign of this Peasant State should happen to be his Royal Highness Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg. His reign has hitherto proved eminently successful, but even the warmest partisans would admit that, at the time when the Prince ascended the throne, his success seemed more than doubtful. After the collapse of Prince Alexander, the difficulty of finding a fit successor to the throne proved well-nigh insuperable. The Bulgarians would not hear of the Prince of Mingrelia or of any other nominee of Russia being appointed as their ruler. On the other hand, it was absolutely certain that any Prince, not nominated by Russia, would be exposed to the same hostile influences which had brought about the military mutiny against his predecessor, and which led to his virtual deposition. The late Prince had been singularly fortunate in the circumstances of his short-lived reign almost up to the period of its dramatic termination. He had added Eastern Roumelia to the territory of Bulgaria; he had defeated Servia; he had fulfilled the aspirations and resuscitated the traditional glories of the Bulgarian nationality; and by these achievements, no less than by

his gallant bearing and charm of manner, he had won the affections of a people singularly distrustful and suspicious of foreigners. If, with all these advantages in his favour, the hero of Slievnitza had been unable to maintain himself on his throne, there seemed to be but a sorry chance of any other foreign Prince succeeding where Alexander had failed. It is not too much to say that for some time the crown of Bulgaria was in the market, and in a market without buyers. Probably, if Bulgaria had been left free to determine her own future, she would at this crisis of her history have converted herself into a Republic. This was not because her people had any special preference for Republican institutions, but because, as M. Thiers said in regard to France, "One can make a republic without republicans, but one cannot make a monarchy without a monarch." Happily, the shrewd good sense which characterized the leaders of the National Movement led them to realize the truth that, under existing conditions, their country could only preserve her independence under a Monarchy. After many abortive attempts and many unsuccessful negotiations, a cadet of one of the royal houses of Europe was found, in the person of Prince Ferdinand, ready to accept the proffered crown.

Previous to his selection by the Regency which was appointed on Prince Alexander's abdication, and of which M. Stambouloff was the leading member, there were probably not a score of persons in all Bulgaria who had ever heard the name of her future sovereign. No doubt, a similar remark would have held good of his predecessor at the time of his accession. But then Alexander came to Bulgaria as her sovereign at the instance and with the approval of the Czar, the Liberator of Bulgaria; while

Ferdinand, on his accession, was not befriended by any great European Power, and was notoriously a *persona ingrata* to the one Power from whom Bulgaria had most either to hope or fear. As the younger son of the head of the non-regnant branch of the Saxe-Coburgs, his father being a great Austrian nobleman, and his mother a daughter of the ex-King of the French, he had no other known claim to distinction than that of belonging to an illustrious family, connected by ties of consanguinity with almost all the royal houses of Europe, and occupying a high position in Austria, where their estates were situated. On the Continent, princes of royal lineage have little chance of distinguishing themselves personally in any way, other than military service; and Prince Ferdinand was still a mere child at the date of the last European war. It was, therefore, no fault of his, if the announcement that an unknown German Prince had been selected to be their future sovereign excited little enthusiasm amidst the people over whom he was called to reign. I question, however, whether a sovereign of far greater personal repute would have been welcomed with any degree of enthusiasm. In as far as the Bulgarians troubled themselves about the choice of their ruler, their one desire was for the restoration of the Prince who had led their armies to victory, and who, as they held, had been sacrificed on account of his loyalty to Bulgaria. The late Prince's restoration, however, was out of the question, and for Bulgaria, situated as she then was, the election of Prince Ferdinand was, if I may use a common phrase, Hobson's choice. Hobson, whoever that mythical personage may have been, is not recorded to have entertained any special regard for the object of his enforced selection.

Under these circumstances, the reigning Prince started on his career heavily handicapped. He was a very young man, even in a country where all the leading men are far younger than the average of Ministers in States of less recent organization. Of necessity, he was completely ignorant of the language, character, and conditions of the country over which he was appointed ruler; and at the outset he suffered by comparison with the previous occupant of the throne. Prince Alexander was brave to a fault, a gallant soldier, and possessed of that easy-going *bonhommie* which furnishes the best passport to the affections of plain, simple country-folk. While indifferent to etiquette, he could, when the necessity arose, assume a commanding manner and aspect; and as long as he could hunt and shoot and drill his troops, he was very well satisfied to leave the administration of public affairs in the hands of his Ministers. The new Prince was the exact opposite of his predecessor in almost every respect. He is distinguished in look, and knows how to bear himself with dignity on State occasions, but there is nothing whatever about him of the *beau sabreur* of which Alexander was so striking a specimen. Born late in his parents' lifetime, he had always been delicate from his childhood, and, I should think, had as little natural liking for sport or soldiering as any man, educated in the atmosphere of the Austrian Court, could well have acquired. Culture and high breeding and distinction of manner are not qualities which appeal greatly to a peasant community; while a love of ceremonial, a taste for etiquette, and a respect for the forms and usages of Court life are uncongenial to a people accustomed to a very plain, very simple, and very frugal mode of life, and much averse to any alteration of their usual habits.

I gather, therefore, that on his accession the Prince was regarded by his subjects, and even by his Ministers, as a sort of show King, who took no interest in anything beyond the pomp and pageantry of sovereignty. In the early days of his reign he was obliged, owing to his ignorance of the country and the language, to leave State matters under the control of his Ministers. He set, however, steadily to work to make himself acquainted with the country over which he had to rule. He learned to speak Bulgarian fluently, if not accurately; he became conversant with the life and ideas of the people; he studied their necessities, requirements, and ambitions; and he soon felt himself competent to form and express an opinion on all matters of legislative and administrative policy. His Ministers were not slow in making the discovery that the Prince did not intend to rest satisfied with the titular position of a King, but was resolved to exercise the full authority of a constitutional sovereign. While holding himself studiously aloof from all questions of party politics, he had the good sense to support steadily the statesmen who then commanded the confidence of the country; his influence has been uniformly exerted in favour of a prudent and cautious policy in foreign affairs. If Bulgaria, under the present reign, has subordinated her national aspirations to the development of her internal resources, and to the re-organization of her civil and military administration, this result has been due in a very large degree to the influence of the palace.

Prince Ferdinand never has acquired, and probably never will acquire, the personal hold on the affections of his subjects which was obtained by Prince Alexander. But he has succeeded in inspiring them with the conviction

that he has their welfare at heart, and that he is the champion of their national independence. I am not sure also whether his determination to surround himself with the paraphernalia of royalty and to keep up all the etiquette and state of a regular Court is not due to policy as much as to personal inclination. There is a good deal of truth in the old riddle about what Majesty becomes when stripped of its externals; human nature is a mass of contradictions everywhere; and I am inclined to think that the Bulgarians—precisely because their own habits, tastes, and ideas are of the peasant order—have a higher respect for the King who is a King, with a Court which is a Court, than they would have for a Prince who was content to be treated simply and solely as the chief magistrate of a peasant commonwealth.

Moreover, the chapter of accidents has caused the Prince's determination to keep up the outward state and dignity of royalty to assume the character of a national protest. If he had been recognized at the outset by the European Powers and treated by them as the chosen sovereign of an independent State, his punctilious insistence on the formalities of a royal Court being observed at Sofia might have been ascribed to mere personal vanity. But, from the commencement of his reign down to the present day, he has been tabooed, treated with scant courtesy, and, so to speak, left out in the cold by his fellow-sovereigns. Though he has now reigned for seven years as the chosen sovereign of Bulgaria, the choice of the nation has been studiously and persistently ignored by the European Powers. No one of these Powers, however friendly disposed, has ever yet formally recognized the existence of the present Bulgarian monarchy. It is not

accorded a place amidst the monarchies whose record is recited in the *Almanach de Gotha.* Even Great Britain and Turkey have never made up their minds to treat the Prince with the ceremonial due to the legal sovereign of an independent State. The great majority of the diplomatic body at Sofia never go to Court or hold any personal communication with the sovereign. The few members of the body who break through the rule of absolute non-recognition do so rather on the ground of the Prince's personal kinship to the dynastics they represent, than to the fact of his being the sovereign of the State to which they are accredited. Whether the policy of non-recognition is wise or unwise, it has had the good result of causing the Bulgarians to regard the resolution of Prince Ferdinand to be treated in all respects as a legitimate sovereign in the light of a protest against the slight inflicted by his non-recognition, not so much on himself as on the country over which he rules.

Within the last few months various events have contributed to render the relations between the Prince and his people more intimate and cordial than they were before. His visit to the West, and the reception he received in Austria, and still more in England, were gratifying to his people as evidence of the importance attached to Bulgaria abroad. Then, too, the Prince gained ground in popular opinion by his marriage last year with the Princess Marie of Parma. The choice of the bride was acceptable to the country from the fact of her representing the house of Bourbon, and of her thus claiming relationship by birth with half the royal dynasties of Europe. Moreover, by her charm of manner and kindliness of nature, the Princess Marie soon made

herself popular in her adopted country; and the feeling of general good-will entertained towards her was intensified when, at the commencement of this year, she gave birth to a son, who was born on Bulgarian soil, and who was given by his parents the name of Boris, the national hero of Bulgarian tradition. The father of a Bulgarian Prince could no longer be regarded as a foreigner, and the dynasty has now acquired a national character which, even under Prince Alexander, it had never quite possessed. An old resident here told me that he had never witnessed such a display of enthusiasm amongst a people singularly undemonstrative by character, as that which greeted the announcement of Prince Boris's birth. The popular feeling about the infant Prince would probably have been far more enthusiastic if his parents had consented to have him brought up in the Orthodox Greek Faith. If the babe ever grows up to manhood he will, if he is wise, recognize the political advantages of belonging to the same religion as his people. When the royal infant happens—as was the case the other day, during his parent's sojourn at Eberfeld—to be the sole kingly occupant of the royal palace, a flag of his own is hoisted over the building. But, as he grows up, a creed of his own would be a more effective passport to Bulgarian respect and affection.

Again, the sudden death of Prince Alexander, which only preceded by a few weeks the birth of an heir to the Bulgarian throne, removed a source of possible danger from the path of the reigning dynasty. Before that event all Bulgarians, who, from one cause or another, were dissatisfied with the existing *régime*, could always contemplate the possibility of Prince Alexander's restoration as a means of redressing the grievances, whether

real or imaginary, under which they considered themselves to suffer. It is only justice to the dead Prince to say that, after his abdication, he acted towards his successor with the most absolute loyalty. But so long as he lived there always existed the nucleus of an Alexander party, even amongst the staunchest advocates of Bulgarian independence. As things are now, Prince Ferdinand is the only possible sovereign of Bulgaria, and the maintenance of the reigning dynasty has, therefore, become identified with the cause of Bulgarian independence. There is, in as far as one can foresee, little probability of any revolutionary movement in Bulgaria which might endanger or retard the progress of national development. Any agitation for dynastic changes must come from without, not from within ; must be of foreign origin, not of home production. The people and the Prince have got, in short, to understand each other, and this understanding has only confirmed the previous conviction that the fortunes of the dynasty and of Bulgarian independence are indissolubly connected, so far, at any rate, as the present generation are concerned.

Nothing can be more courteous or pleasant than the Prince's manner when he wishes to make himself agreeable. Owing to the prolonged illness of the Princess, I was not able to see him during the earlier part of my sojourn at Sofia. But, on the various occasions when I saw him later, I had the advantage of learning his views concerning Bulgarian matters, about which he expressed himself with great frankness and with great acuteness. Many things that his Highness said to me were clearly not intended to be repeated, but the general purport of his conversation may fairly be recorded. He took, or

professed to take, great interest in the impression which had been left upon me by my sojourn in Bulgaria; and almost exhausted my limited powers of suitable reply by his repeated expressions of regret that, owing to the Princess's illness, he had not been able to receive me earlier or see me oftener. In the uniform in which he invariably makes his appearances in public he does not look to the best advantage. But, in ordinary day dress, he is a tall, well-built, handsome man of thirty, with a very pleasant smile, a heavy moustache, a pronounced Roman nose, and singularly bright, piercing eyes. Though there is not a trace of grey yet in his coal-black hair, he might well be taken for some years older than his real age, and he has the look of a man who has already had more than his fair share of trouble and anxiety. He, obviously, takes his kingship very seriously, and has decided views of his own as to the external and internal policy of his country. Indeed, my own doubt would rather be whether his personal individuality was not too marked for the passive part which his position almost imposes upon him. Of course, I cannot say how far his remarks to me were entirely of his own making, but certainly they were the remarks of a man who had studied the subject of Bulgaria thoughtfully and had arrived at certain definite conclusions. He spoke highly of the self-control, energy, and sobriety of the Bulgarians as a race, of their extraordinary aptitude in acquiring knowledge and in assimilating the ideas as well as the language of foreign nations, an aptitude which in no wise interfered with their intense sentiment of nationality. He professed to have been greatly impressed by the facility with which his Ministers—men peasant-born and

self-educated—picked up the knowledge of public affairs and the manners of society. The Bulgarian intellect was, to his thinking, a sort of virgin soil in which ideas took root rapidly, and, when they had taken root, were retained with all the tenacity of a vigorous and uncultured memory. As to his own position, both abroad and at home, he spoke with extraordinary freedom. He did not conceal the mortification he had experienced at his treatment by the leading foreign Powers, but added that towards Russia he never had and never would express himself otherwise than with respect and gratitude. He could never forget, or wish to forget, that it was to Russia his adopted country owed her liberation; that it was Russia who had created the army which secured her independence; Russia whose uniform he wore, and was proud to wear. Nothing, he was convinced, could have been more loyal or more disinterested than the policy of the late Czar towards Bulgaria. It was since Alexander the Second's death that this policy had unfortunately been changed.

The Prince seemed to be under no delusion with respect to the nature of his hold on the Bulgarian people. The people, he said, were democratic in their traditions, their ideas, and their instincts. They had accepted a monarchy, not from any strong abstract preference for monarchical institutions, but because they knew and felt the monarchy, as represented by him, to be essential to their existence as an independent nation. He was convinced that in this sense ninety-nine Bulgarians out of one hundred were staunch supporters of the reigning dynasty, the partisans of Russia not numbering more than one per cent. of the whole population. The majority in favour of the

Ministry in office at the time of our conversation was, in his opinion, a very large one; still there was an opposition which might hereafter become formidable. This opposition was to be found almost exclusively in the towns. The peasants took no interest whatever in politics, properly so called; but amidst the town folk there were two parties, which, for want of any better name, might be termed Liberal and Conservative. In reality the questions at issue between them were personal and not political. In a country like this official employment was the great ambition of every man of any intelligence and education; and the real gravamen of the charges brought against any Ministry was that, by the fact of remaining in power, they kept other people out of office. For his own part, he had always endeavoured to preserve absolute neutrality as to party politics, and had never allowed personal sentiments to influence his policy. It was a matter of great satisfaction to him to have M. Grekoff as Minister of Foreign Affairs on account of his great ability, though M. Grekoff had been originally a leader of the Conservative party, which formerly was anti-dynastic in its ideas. When M. Slavkoff, who had previously been a violent partisan of Russia, called upon him and told him that since he had discovered the policy of Russia to be inimical to Bulgarian independence, he had rallied to the support of the dynasty, he, as Prince, had exerted all his influence to secure M. Slavkoff's accession to office. Though a devout Catholic himself, he had the greatest respect for the Greek Church, and had shown this respect recently by granting a free pardon to the Metropolitan Clement, who, in his own pulpit, had actually denounced him as a usurper. On his own account he had no apprehension concerning the Socialist

agitation, which, undoubtedly, had made some way of late in Bulgaria. The young men who were sent abroad to be educated came back, as a rule, imbued with communist theories; and these theories were more or less in harmony with the communal system to which the Bulgarians had been accustomed for centuries. *The Progress,* which, in his judgment, was far the best-written paper in the Principality, advocated the doctrines of Lebel and Lassalle. Notwithstanding this, the Socialism of the *jeunesse bulgarienne* was skin-deep, and dried up as soon as they got into the public service. For the present, and for a long time to come, the influence of the small peasant proprietary, which forms the great mass of the population, must prove fatal to any Socialist propaganda. If his descendants ever succeeded to the throne, they might possibly find Socialism a serious danger; but in our own time it was never likely to be formidable.

With regard to foreign affairs, the Prince held that the proper policy for Bulgaria was to maintain the most friendly relations with Turkey. The difficulty was that Turkey, under the irresolute rule of the Sultan, could never quite make up her mind whether she ought to be friendly or unfriendly to Bulgaria. In home affairs his one rule was to adhere resolutely to any policy adopted after due reflection; but at the same time he let the country know that this policy was just and logical. He considered that the system of public education was in danger of being carried to an extent beyond the requirements of the State. He also held that Bulgaria was hardly yet fitted for the absolute freedom of the Press which she at present enjoyed, and remarked that the Constitution, by which this freedom had been decreed, had been deliberately

framed by Count Donderkoff in order to render the independence of Bulgaria impossible, and so convert her into a Russian province.

His Highness spoke to me in French, but frequently employed English words for which there is no exact French equivalent, and I may say his pronunciation of these words was extremely good. He took a great interest, apparently, in English politics; he spoke very favourably about Lord Rosebery, by whom he had been much impressed during his recent visit to England, and stated his fervent hope that in the interest of Bulgaria there might be no change in the direction of English foreign policy, as conducted alike under Lord Salisbury and Lord Rosebery. He alluded very warmly to his personal friendship for the late Duke of Albany; and I noticed he always spoke of our Queen as *Ma tante.* Altogether he left on me the impression of a man who had thought and read a good deal, who had distinct ideas of his own, who attached considerable value to his own judgment, and who might, if he were thwarted, prove obstinate.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ESTATES OF THE REALM.

In what I have written concerning the Constitution of Bulgaria I have endeavoured to explain the theory of government under which the affairs of the State are administered. But in all countries, and especially in all countries whose institutions are of novel and, to a certain extent, of exotic origin, there is always a marked difference between theory and practice. It would be a mistake to assume that, because Bulgaria possesses Parliamentary institutions, she is governed absolutely and entirely after the fashion of a genuine constitutional State. It would be an equal mistake to conclude that, because her administration is not always conducted in strict compliance with constitutional principles, the country is therefore under autocratic rule. If I were compelled to define the government of the Peasant Kingdom, I should say the State was administered on democratic principles, tempered by autocratic practice. Let me try and show what is meant by this seeming paradox.

There are, to use our English political phraseology, three Estates in Bulgaria: the Crown, the Ministers, and the Sobranje. The Prince possesses larger powers than those exercised by ordinary constitutional sovereigns. In practice, as well as in theory, he appoints the Ministry

and commands the army, while his personal favour or disfavour exercises an influence in politics which the mere will of the sovereign cannot exercise in countries where Parliamentary government is fully established and recognized. His power, however, of interference in political affairs is limited by certain very important restrictions. He can appoint and dismiss Ministers, but he cannot maintain permanently in power any Ministry which is out of harmony with national sentiment as represented by the Sobranje. Nor, even if he had the full support of his Ministers, could he carry out any policy which was distinctly and directly in opposition to the will of the country. Whatever may be the defects, either of the Sobranje or of the army, both these bodies are essentially national institutions, composed of exactly the same elements as the mass of a singularly homogeneous population. Under existing conditions, it is almost impossible to conceive of any administrative measure proving grossly distasteful to the country without being equally distasteful to the Sobranje and to the army. It follows that, however wide the powers of the Prince may be, these powers cannot be exercised in direct opposition to national sentiments. If Prince Alexander had remained on the throne as the hero of Slievnitza, and if his political courage and capacity had been equal to those he displayed in military affairs, his authority might have assumed an autocratic character. But Prince Ferdinand, even if he had any wish to do so, could not convert his constitutional sovereignship into a dictatorship. By necessity, as well as by inclination, he must reign, if he is to continue to reign, as a constitutional monarch.

The Ministry, in much the same way, possess a latitude

of action exceeding that accorded to their fellows in more highly organized societies. So long as they administer public affairs in such a way as to satisfy the Prince on one hand, and the mass of their fellow-countrymen on the other, they have no great need to trouble themselves as to whether their modes of administration are exactly in accordance with their constitutional powers. They may, and do, influence the elections in a way which is not exactly constitutional; they may, and do, disregard at times the rights conceded by the charter to all citizens; they may, and do, occasionally administer public affairs in a high-handed and autocratic fashion; but in their case, as in that of the Prince, their power of acting arbitrarily is limited by the condition that this power must be employed in conformity with, or at any rate not in opposition to, the general sentiments of the country. Being of the same class as the population whose affairs they direct, being imbued with the same ideas, aspirations, and prejudices, they are not very likely to favour a policy or adopt a measure flagrantly in opposition to popular opinion. But, even if they were so minded, I fail to see how they could carry out their purpose. In all grave issues they have to take account of the sentiments of the Sobranje and of the army; and these sentiments must, by the nature of things, be, as an almost universal rule, in accord with the will of the nation.

The Sobranje, whatever its theoretical authority may be, does not as yet possess the full powers of a constitutional Legislature. Parliamentary institutions were utterly unknown in Bulgaria till a very few years ago; and I fancy that, in as far as the Bulgarians, at the time of their liberation, had any distinct idea of their own as to the

proper functions of a Parliament, that idea was based upon their experience of the old Turkish Meglis. In accordance with this experience, they would naturally look upon Parliament as a body designed, not so much to appoint or overthrow Ministries, or even to take the initiative in legislation, but as one intended to advise upon and watch over the general administration of public affairs.

Except in the large towns very little interest is taken in politics. To the great mass of the electorate it is a matter of utter indifference who their representatives may be. The difficulty is to get the electors to vote at all; and in the majority of instances the representatives are virtually nominated by the Government of the day. The constituencies pay no attention to the fact whether their members do or do not take any active part in the debates. So long as no new taxes are imposed upon the staple industry of the country, the peasants, I gather, are in ignorance as to what is done in the Sobranje, or as to whether the Sobranje is or is not in session. If this is so, it is easy to understand why the national Legislature has not hitherto assumed an importance corresponding with the power it possesses or might possess. Still, as things are, no Ministry could remain in office, supposing the Sobranje refused to vote the estimates, without an overt violation of the Constitution; and, under existing circumstances, neither the Prince nor the Ministry are likely even to dream of resorting to a step which might, and probably would, furnish a pretext for foreign intervention.

All experience shows that, when a representative body is possessed of the power of making its will supreme, it soon learns how that power can best be exercised. There are already signs that the Bulgarian Parliament is

becoming more of a substantive reality. On one or two occasions a Minister has had to resign, not because he lost the confidence of the sovereign, but because he failed to command the approval of the National Assembly. The electors are beginning to realize that by returning to the Sobranje representatives pledged to support their own interests, they can secure these interests being duly protected. The Government no longer find it as easy as it used to be to regulate the result of the polls, and I was assured by the political opponents of the then existing Ministry that, at the next election, the dissatisfaction of the peasants with the increasing burden of the taxes on agriculture would manifest itself in the return of a really formidable opposition. I am not at all certain how far this is true; but the mere fact that such an assertion should be made with confidence, shows that Parliamentary institutions are gradually becoming a real factor in the public life of Bulgaria. I should say that at present the Sobranje has very little initiative in the administration of public affairs. At the same time, it constitutes a formidable barrier against any permanent arbitrary action on the part of the Sovereign or the Ministers, provided always that that action is one to which popular opinion is distinctly hostile. The Sobranje also exercises a limited, though increasing, influence on the course of legislation. Thus, whatever may be the defects of the Bulgarian Government, it has the practical advantage that the policy of the administration must necessarily be in harmony with the will of the nation upon all points—and as yet these points are not many in number—concerning which the nation has a distinct will of its own.

The Sobranje was not in session during my sojourn in Sofia. As a rule it meets in October and adjourns before Christmas. I cannot, therefore, speak of its sittings from personal observation. The Chamber is a fine building, looking like an opera-house, and is of the usual Sofiote brick-and-stucco order. It stands on the outskirts of the town, at the head of the Constantinople Road, and seemed to me, when I visited it, well constructed for the purpose of a Legislative Chamber. Over its portals is inscribed in Bulgarian the national motto of Belgium, *L'union fait la force*, by which, I presume, the union between Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia is commemorated. The procedure employed in the Assembly is modelled upon that of the Belgian Chambers. The Ministers need not be members of the Sobranje, though they generally are so in fact; but by virtue of their offices they have a right, whether they are members or not, to take part in the debates, though they can only vote on a division, in the case of their being deputies. Votes are given by ballot, and the Chamber is open to the public. In the early days the majority of the deputies were peasant farmers by occupation as well as by birth; but gradually the representation of the constituencies has passed into the hands of the trading and professional classes, and only some ten per cent. of the members are at present peasants living solely upon the farming of their own lands. This change, however, signifies far less in Bulgaria than it would elsewhere. The traders, lawyers, doctors, and journalists, who compose the great majority of the Sobranje, are, with rare exceptions, sons of peasants interested indirectly, if not directly, in the land, and belonging by birth, education, and character to the same

category as their constituents. Officers in active service and priests are not allowed to sit as deputies.

Participation in the debates is pretty well confined to the Ministers and ex-Ministers. There can hardly be said to be any organised Parliamentary opposition ; in the present Sobranje the number of avowed opponents of the late Government did not exceed a dozen. The Ministers propose their measures and explain their policy whenever they think proper, and if they are met by any serious objections on the part of the deputies, these objections are generally removed at private interviews between the Ministers and the malcontent deputies, instead of by discussion in public debate. The deputies, as a body, are, in accordance with the national character, not addicted to talking for talking's sake. Their conception of Parliamentary duty is to draw their salaries of sixteen shillings a day and to vote with the Ministry to whom, in the main, they owe their election. There are, as I have already stated, certain limits beyond which the support of the deputies cannot be counted upon with confidence. But within these limits they consider their duty fulfilled if they vote steadily and solidly as the Ministry direct. Save under very exceptional circumstances, it is only upon questions of finance that there is anything approaching to Parliamentary criticism and discussion.

According to our English ideas a Chamber, mainly nominated by the Government in office, can hardly be regarded as a representative assembly. I cannot doubt, from all I heard on every side, that the elections are constantly, if not habitually, manipulated in the interest of the party in power. The use of the word party is, I may add, calculated to convey an erroneous impression. In

our sense of the word, there are no parties in Bulgaria. Parties there mean the partisans of one politician or another. In the great majority of instances the electors will not take the trouble to vote; and the elections, if left to take care of themselves, would probably result in the return of a Chamber representing an insignificant minority of the nation. This danger is obviated by the fact that the elections are not left to take care of themselves. To illustrate my meaning let me cite one case out of a score of similar cases reported to me. My informant in this particular instance was an old English resident, who had passed most of a long life in the country, and who, though very friendly to the new order of things, is in a position that renders him absolutely indifferent to the favour or disfavour of the Government. This gentleman assured me that not very long ago, on the occasion of the election in his town of a representative to the Sobranje, he took the trouble of counting the number of electors who presented themselves at the polling booth. According to his observation, some 200 electors out of a total of 10,000 recorded their votes. On the poll being declared, it was announced that the numbers for the Ministerial and opposition candidate were respectively 3500 and 3000. On commenting afterwards on this discrepancy to the returning officer, who was a personal friend of his own, he remarked that he himself had only seen 200 electors present themselves at the poll. The answer, given in perfect good faith, was to this effect: "You surely must be mistaken in your counting, for there were really 500 genuine votes recorded." In like fashion it seems to be admitted that on various occasions, when opposition candidates have been returned by small votes, the elections have been

annulled on one pretence or another by the order of the administration, and fresh elections have been held, at which care was taken to avoid the recurrence of a similar mishap. I believe that practices of this kind have been common under every Bulgarian administration.

Great allowance must fairly be made for this mode of working the elections. After centuries of subjection Bulgaria was suddenly provided with Parliamentary institutions, adapted only to States whose people had been trained for generations in the practice of self-government. If the Ministry were to abstain from all interference with the elections, the machinery of administration would infallibly fall out of gear. Until the electorate learn to care about choosing their own representatives, the choice has got to be made for them. In as far as I could observe, the fact that each successive Ministry has more or less manipulated the elections is not resented as a grievance by the mass of the population. This system of governmental intervention opens the way, of course, to many abuses; but for the present the evils of non-intervention would, in the opinion of thinking Bulgarians, exceed the evils of intervention; and in politics, after all, everything is only a choice of evils.

Moreover, when all is said and done, the Sobranje, however elected, represents fairly enough the average sentiment of the nation. Given the conditions which I have tried to explain, the Ministers, whoever they may be, are bound, whether they like it or not, to govern in accordance with the sentiments of their fellow-citizens; and, this being so, a more or less nominated assembly represents the country quite as fairly as any other. As things are it would be very difficult to find candidates for the Sobranje

who were prepared to support a policy opposed to the deliberate convictions or prejudices of the country. Even if such candidates were forthcoming, it would not be easy to secure their return. So long as the sovereign and the Ministers have in the last resort no practical means of coercing the deliberate will of the nation, that will must dictate the general policy of the Government. For the present the existing system of administration seems to me to provide as large an amount of self-government as is called for by the actual requirements of the Peasant State. Of course, with the increase of wealth and the spread of education these requirements will become greater, and the elections will have to be conducted with stricter regard to the ethics of popular representation. But no Parliament, however elected, could be more truly representative of the Bulgarian people—using the word representation in its real, not nominal sense—than the Sobranje is to-day.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MINISTRY.

THE personality of the Ministers plays a far more important part in Bulgaria than could be the case in an older and more highly organized country. Even if Russia, at the period when she had just liberated Bulgaria from Turkish rule, would have consented to the establishment of a Bulgarian republic, the external and internal conditions of the country rendered it utterly and manifestly unfit for republican institutions. At this time the intention of Russia was undoubtedly to convert Bulgaria into a province of the Muscovite Empire; but the time was not ripe for the execution of this policy, and, for the moment, failing a republic, the only form of government which could possibly be established was an hereditary and a more or less constitutional monarchy. Both in Servia and Roumania there had been native families which had traditional claims to the sovereignty of the country, and from which a monarch either was or could have been selected. But in Bulgaria there was not a single family associated in any way whatever with its previous history, nor, I should say, a single person who, either by birth, wealth, or station, stood so clearly above the common level that he could show any sort of claim to be ruler over his fellow-countrymen. If, therefore, there was to be a

monarchy at all, the monarch must of necessity be a foreign Prince, unconnected with, and strange to, the country over which he was called to reign. Thus by the logic of facts, when Alexander of Battenburg was elected Prince, his Ministers became, not only the administrators of public affairs, but the interpreters, if I may use the word, between the sovereign and the country. Till the concluding years of Prince Alexander's reign, his Ministers were, in reality, Russian officials; but after the recall of the Russian civil and military authorities, the annexation of Eastern Roumelia and the Servian campaign conferred upon the Prince an exceptional position, which made him independent—or, to speak more correctly, led him to believe that he was independent—of his Ministers. This mistaken belief was, I may add, one of the main causes of his downfall.

Prince Ferdinand, on his accession to the vacant throne, was inexperienced in government, strange to the country, unacquainted with its languages and its customs, and left almost alone amongst a people, one of whose dominant characteristics is a jealous distrust of foreigners. It was the good fortune of Bulgaria that the Minister who came to the front after the abdication of Prince Alexander was a man of singular ability and exceptional force of character. M. Stambouloff is still in the prime of life, though in Bulgaria, where all public men are very young, his forty odd years are considered advanced enough to give him the advantage of ripe experience. In common with all his fellow-politicians, M. Stambouloff is the son of a peasant farmer, who was sufficiently well off to give his children a better education than most Bulgarians were able to acquire during the days of Turkish rule. As a lad he was bright and intelligent, and was, I believe,

originally destined for the priesthood. In the era of which I speak, the priesthood was the most lucrative profession open to a Bulgarian who had ability enough to work his way upwards. Even if, which I should greatly doubt, M. Stambouloff had any personal desire to enter Holy Orders, his clerical career was prematurely cut short by the course of public events. After the wont of the young Bulgarians of his day, he was an ardent partisan of the national cause, and took part in one of the many agitations against Turkish rule which were encouraged, if not initiated, by Russia. He fell under suspicion and had to leave the country. He took refuge at Odessa, where he resided for some years. Very little is known about his sojourn on Russian soil. But it may be taken for granted that, in common with all his fellow-exiles at this period, he was in close relations with the Pan-Sclav party, who, in those days, acted as the pioneers of the Russian propaganda in the Balkan Peninsula. What is certain is that he employed his time in completing his education, and that he earned some reputation as a Bulgarian patriot, and therefore—for at this epoch the two terms were synonymous—as a partisan of Russia. He also resided for some time in Paris, and, I believe, took a degree in Law. When the Russo-Turkish War broke out he returned to his native country and was elected a member of the Sobranje. In Parliament he soon made his mark as an effective speaker and an active politician, and at the time of Prince Alexander's resignation he was President of the Chamber. Up to then he had not identified himself conspicuously either with the pro-Russian or the anti-Russian party; and it was rather on account of his official position, than of his political celebrity, that

the Prince, when leaving Bulgaria, appointed Stambouloff one of the Regents during the interregnum. His superior ability and power of will soon made him the virtual head of the Regency; and it was mainly through his efforts that the country preserved her independence, and succeeded in obtaining as her sovereign a Prince who—whatever else he may or may not have been—was most distinctly not a nominee of Russia. Bulgaria for the Bulgarians was the watchword of Stambouloff's policy; and this policy he pursued steadily and persistently during the years throughout which he held office as Prime Minister under Prince Ferdinand.

It is no disparagement to Stambouloff's colleagues to say that the relations of Bulgaria and the internal administration of the country were determined and directed by him throughout his long tenure of office. He had certain very obvious advantages on his side. The sullen refusal of Russia to recognize the new *régime*, or to allow it to be recognized by the other European Powers, gave a national character to his anti-Russian policy. The numerous intrigues to which he was subjected, and which culminated in the unsuccessful attempt upon his life, when his colleague, M. Beltscheff, was assassinated by mistake in his place, endeared him to his countrymen as the champion of the national independence. All the diplomatists who have come into contact with him, whether they might approve or disapprove of his policy, are agreed as to the remarkable resolution and tact with which he conducted the negotiations between Bulgaria and foreign Powers. The impression left upon my mind by my conversations with the late Premier was, that the Bismarck of Bulgaria, as his partisans are fond of

describing him, possessed no very exceptional knowledge of foreign politics, and that his success in foreign negotiations was due rather to general good sense than to any special diplomatic statecraft. Indeed, it seemed to me that M. Stambouloff took more personal interest in questions connected with the land than he did in foreign or general politics. He informed me that he was one of the largest landowners in the country, that he held about 20,000 acres of foreign land and about 12,000 acres of arable land in different parts of the country, and that the income he derived from this land brought him in next to nothing. He assured me that in the present condition of Bulgaria, owing to the absence of roads, the cost of carriage, and the scarcity of labour, farming on a large scale could not be made to pay; it was only peasants, who had small holdings and worked their own farms themselves, who could make a profit. The scarcity of labour was, in his opinion, a very serious matter. If the Moslem exodus continued, the Government would be obliged to import foreign labourers and settle them on the State lands. The construction of railroads in Asia Minor had already increased enormously the export of wheat from Turkey, and had thereby diminished the demand for Bulgarian bread-stuff. Railways and roads were, in his judgment, essential to the development of the country.

His home policy, which is the one most attacked by his opponents, must be judged by the results. He has certainly succeeded in restoring order, in rendering life and property absolutely secure throughout the principality, in developing the material prosperity of the country, and in maintaining the forms of constitutional

government. His detractors—and they are many—accuse him of being arbitrary, dictatorial, high-handed, and unscrupulous. I have no doubt there is some ground for these criticisms. On the other hand, I am convinced that, on the whole, he has governed the country by modes by which the country, to say the least, does not object to being governed. I am convinced, too, that if Bulgaria were converted into a republic, whose President had to be elected by universal suffrage, Stambouloff, if votes could be given freely, would be certain of election by an overwhelming majority.

I remember years ago asking General Prim, who was denouncing to me the enormities committed, or supposed to be committed, under Queen Isabella's reign, how it was, supposing his accusations to be true, that his countrymen submitted to her rule. His answer was that her Majesty was *muy Espanola*, or every inch a Spaniard. I imagine a similar explanation would account for a good deal of Stambouloff's personal popularity. His features seem to me to denote Tartar rather than Sclav descent; but in all other respects he is every inch a Bulgarian. He shares the ideas, the aspirations, the interests, and the prejudices of the Bulgarian people, just as he shared their conspiracies and their struggles. It is a significant fact that in the early days of Bulgarian independence the so-called Conservative party, headed by M. Stoiloff, M. Grekoff, and M. Nikolaieff, were desirous of breaking up the communal system of land tenure, and of substituting large farms worked by labourers for small holdings tilled by their proprietors. The proposal was defeated by the opposition of Stambouloff, who made himself the exponent of the democratic instincts of the Bulgarian

people. He can speak to his fellow-countrymen as they like to be spoken to ; his manners are those to which they are accustomed ; and, whenever he chooses, he can be a peasant amidst peasants. He has picked up, as any man of his ability is certain to do, the experience required to enable him to take his part in State functions, and to hold his own in dealing with foreign statesmen. When, however, you see him addressing a crowd, sitting round a table, surrounded by Bulgarians, playing cards or tossing for drinks, shooting in the mountains, or strolling about his brewery, you see much more, I fancy, of the real Stambouloff than you do when you meet him at Court.

Nothing can be simpler externally than his mode of life. In addition to his land and his investments in stocks, which are reported to be large, M. Stambouloff is the owner of an important brewery a short way outside Sofia. The brewery failed in the hands of the original owners ; the property was sold by the Bank of Bulgaria, who had a mortgage upon it, and was bought by the then Premier on very advantageous terms. He intends to open it again, and is expected to make a very good income out of the brewery. According to the standard of the country, he is a man of large fortune, but he still dwells with his family in a small house in one of the side streets of Sofia. Judging from what I saw of his residence, there is little more of luxury, not to mention comfort, about its internal arrangements than about those of any ordinary Sofiote household. After the attack on his life, sentries were posted before his door, and he never quitted the house without an armed escort. With this exception, his mode of life was exactly the same as that of nine-tenths of his fellow-townsmen. He was accessible to all comers. On all mornings of

the week when there were no Cabinet Councils, his reception-room was crowded with peasants, who had some grievance to complain of, some favour to ask, or some private business to transact. To use French phrases for which we have no exact equivalent, I should say that Stambouloff was emphatically *bon enfant* and *serviable.* His personal popularity is undoubtedly one of the main factors of his political power. But this sort of popularity is unattainable except by men who take a genuine pleasure in seeing others pleased.

In person, Stambouloff is short, stout, and thickset. The want of distinction of the face is redeemed by keen, bright eyes, by a clear sallow complexion, and by a smile, if he so chooses, of singular sweetness. I was never present on an occasion when he did not so choose, but I should think that on such occasions the Tartar aspect of his features would come into unpleasant prominence. As a public speaker he is admittedly without a rival in Bulgaria. As an administrator he towers equally above his colleagues. Exception may be taken to his modes of administration, but hitherto they have been crowned with invariable success. The dilatoriness which is characteristic of all Oriental administration, and which is a common failing amidst Bulgarian Ministers, is unknown to Stambouloff. Whatever he orders to be done has got to be done, and done at once. Whatever he promises is as good as performed. Loved by many, hated by few, he is feared by all.

Under a "one man system," the colleagues of the paramount Minister play necessarily a very subordinate part. Public life is still too novel a thing in Bulgaria for the leaders of the Opposition to take any active part in

politics. All they can do is to intrigue and bide their time. Indeed, the Opposition may be said to be non-existent, so long as they remain—to excuse the bull—out of office. M. Stambouloff, in conversing with foreigners, was apt to complain of the utter absence of any organized opposition in the Sobranje. "It is impossible for me," he would say, "to explain my policy or defend my measures properly, when there is nobody to criticise the one or attack the other." His successor in the Premiership, M. Stoiloff, was reckoned the leader of the Opposition, but he always declined to oppose M. Stambouloff in the Sobranje, and lived almost entirely in seclusion. While I was in Sofia, M. Stoiloff never came to the club, of which he was formerly a constant frequenter, and though he had the reputation of being the ablest lawyer in the country, and is, by the way, the counsel of the British Legation, he was hardly known personally to the *Corps Diplomatique*, whose houses form the only social meeting ground to be found in Sofia.

Even his own colleagues in the Ministry were over-shadowed by Stambouloff's marked personality. The best known of these colleagues, one might almost say the only one known abroad, is M. Grekoff, the late Minister of Foreign Affairs. Judging by appearances, you would put him down as belonging to a higher social grade than the rank and file of Bulgarian politicians; I believe, however, that the only difference is that he was sent abroad earlier than most of his contemporaries, and received a more complete education. He studied law for many years in Paris, speaks French very fluently and very accurately, has travelled a great deal, knows much of foreign countries, and has the manners, looks, and tone of a man of the

world. If you were to put a fez on his head you would take him for a Pasha of the class usually chosen to represent the Ottoman Empire in foreign lands. Not only in general education, but in political knowledge of statesmanship, M. Grekoff was, I should think, ahead of all his colleagues, excepting the ex-Premier; but he had not the intense vitality which made Stambouloff the leading man in the State. The other Ministers were good officials, and may possess great political attainments which as yet they have had no means of displaying. Their names, however, as yet say nothing to the world outside Bulgaria, and not much to the world within.

If I have succeeded in conveying any adequate impression of the peculiar and unique position occupied by the late Bulgarian Premier, it must be obvious that the relations between the Prime Minister and the Court cannot, even with good-will on both sides, have always been of a perfectly harmonious character. In the early days of the present reign the Prince was necessarily compelled to form his opinions simply and solely on the advice of his Ministers. But after the Prince had acquired a knowledge of Bulgarian language and politics, and had made himself personally acquainted with all the leading men in the country, he became entitled to take a more independent part in administrative matters than he did at the outset. It is not in human nature that a young, active-minded, and ambitious Prince should not at times resent the ascendency of an imperious Minister, while it would be still less in accordance with human nature, if the personal opponents of the Minister did not suggest to the Prince that, with a Premier taken from their own ranks, his own authority would be more easily asserted and more

fully recognized. Up to the other day, in spite of occasional disagreements, the relations between the Prince and the Minister were amicable, if not cordial. Both of them were convinced that they were indispensable to each other. It was difficult to see how the Prince could get on without the aid of Stambouloff. It was equally difficult to see how Stambouloff could get on without the Prince, whose presence on the throne was essential as a guarantee for the independence of Bulgaria. The Minister was perfectly well aware that his tenure of office depended upon forces which might at any moment pass beyond his control. His friends, however, were confident — and I fancy he himself was equally confident—that even if he had to resign office, no Ministry, presided over by any other statesman, could remain six months in power in the face of his opposition, and that any crisis which ejected him temporarily from office would ultimately result in rendering his services more indispensable than ever.

Now that the crisis has occurred, it remains to be seen how far these anticipations will be justified by the result. All I can say myself, is that if I could be certain of M. Stambouloff's not falling a victim to the embittered personal and political animosities of which he is the object in many quarters, I should feel little doubt of his early return to office.

FINANCES OF THE PEASANT STATE.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BUDGET OF 1894.

IN the year 1879, the Principality started on its independent existence with a modest capital of a little under £500,000. This capital was composed of £80,000 invested in the National Bank of Bulgaria, to which I shall have to refer more at length; of cash in the treasury, estimated at £170,000; and of a fund which had been taken over when Adrianople was captured by the Russians during the war with Turkey, and which amounted to close upon a quarter of a million. As, however, the Russians, later on, claimed this fund as belonging to them by rights, and, whether justly or unjustly, took it away in 1880 from the Bulgarian treasury, it may fairly be said that £250,000 constituted the stock-in-trade with which Bulgaria commenced business. The people were unused to freedom; the men who came to the front at this period had had little or no experience of government or of finance; an administration, an army, and a capital had to be created; and nobody could reasonably have blamed Bulgaria if, intoxicated by sudden independence, she had, like most young countries, run rashly into debt.

Bulgaria, however, in this respect, formed an exception to the ordinary rule. The Ministers and the deputies in the Sobranje were, as I cannot have too often occasion to repeat, peasants or sons of peasants; and the frugal, thrifty, and cautious character of a small peasant proprietary left its mark at once on the policy of the State. Whenever the Government urged the necessity for liberal expenditure, the members of the Sobranje dwelt upon the advantages of rigid economy; and on this point they commonly proved obdurate, though on every other point they followed blindly the guidance of the executive.

The result has been that in Bulgaria the national Budgets are framed on principles much at variance with those in vogue in other countries. The revenue is always estimated beforehand greatly below its real value; the expenditure is calculated considerably beyond the actual outlay. In the course of the eleven years from 1881 to 1892, there are only four years during which the actual revenue of the year did not prove largely in excess of its estimated yield. During the same period there was only one year in which the annual expenditure exceeded the estimates. As a net result, the first eleven years of Bulgaria's independent existence showed a balance of receipts over expenditure of upwards of a million and a quarter sterling.

In Bulgaria, as in most continental countries, there are two classes of Budgets. The ordinary Budget comprises the normal expenditure and revenue of the year; the extraordinary Budget deals with the items that, in a trading business, would be carried to capital account. At the commencement of each session, the

draft Budgets, whether ordinary or extraordinary, are laid before the Sobranje, and submitted to their approval. The final Budgets, that is, the statements of the actual revenue and expenditure of the year, are only submitted when the exact amounts have been definitely ascertained. In a country such as this, a long time is required to get the accounts properly made out by the local officials in the different towns and villages; and, therefore, the final Budget of any particular year is often not made up till some considerable time after its expiry.

Figures are bad reading at the best of times; I have endeavoured to steer as clear as I can of the elaborate statistics which have been published on various occasions by the Bulgarian authorities, with a view of demonstrating the present and potential resources of the State. Still, the questions, whether the country is solvent, whether its revenue is prudently expended, and whether its resources are capable of further development, have got to be answered, before one can arrive at any satisfactory conclusion as to the condition and prospects of Bulgaria in its capacity as the youngest member of the European Commonwealth. The simplest and shortest way of answering these questions will be, I think, to take the ordinary Budget for the present year and to explain its salient features. The financial statement, which was issued early this year, and which will be submitted to the Sobranje at the commencement of the approaching session, has at all events the merit of being short and simple. Converted into English pounds sterling, and leaving out fractions of pounds, the figures of the Budget for 1894 stand as follows:—

ESTIMATED RECEIPTS.

	£
Direct taxes	1,677,690
Indirect taxes	894,480
Imposts	156,260
Fines	28,820
State revenues	301,960
Royalties	230,310
Miscellaneous receipts	753,580
Total	4,043,100

ESTIMATED EXPENSES.

	£
Public Debt	693,496
Civil List	70,867
High Court of Account	10,815
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	136,132
,, the Interior	374,051
,, Education	352,949
,, Finance	680,998
,, Justice	190,549
,, War	896,511
,, Commerce and Agriculture	168,614
,, Public Works	516,096
Total	4,091,078

The Budget, therefore, shows a nominal deficit of £47,978. As, however, the receipts are believed to have been calculated, as usual, below their real yield, the probabilities are that this year, as heretofore, the final Budget will show a surplus.

The receipts, which I have given under their general headings as stated in the Budget, are composed of the following items:—

The Direct Taxes consist of the land-tax, that is, of a tenth of the gross value of the produce of any farm, calculated on the average yield of the four preceding years; the taxes levied on goats, sheep, and pigs, the duty being tenpence a head on the first named and sixpence a head on the two latter; the licenses for the

sale of tobacco, spirits, and sundry other small articles. What proportion these different taxes bear respectively to the total of close upon a million and three-quarters derived from direct taxes, that is, to some seven-sixteenths of the whole revenue, is not stated in the Budget. But I gather that the land-tax constitutes the main item of this source of revenue.

The Indirect Taxes consist of the import and export duties levied at the frontier, and of the excise duties upon raw tobacco grown in the country, upon the manufacture of beer and spirits, and upon the production of native salt.

The Imposts are made up of fees charged for registration, for succession duties, for legal certificates, for passports, and for licenses to shoot fish and carry arms.

The Fines include sums levied by the courts of law and amounts chargeable on the salaries paid to all public servants, penalties for frauds on the revenue, and for contraventions of the laws regulating the terms under which trading and personal licenses are granted.

Miscellaneous Receipts cover the profits on the State railways, and on the postal and telegraph service, port dues, and subscriptions to the State telephones.

The State Revenues are levied from wood cut in the Government forests, from coal and salt and other mines, from fees charged at public institutions, from the profit on the State bank and the State printing establishment, and from a variety of minor enterprises for which State sanction is required.

The Miscellaneous Receipts are gathered from a variety of sources. The principal of these sources are the duties charged on cattle imported from abroad, the fees paid for

exemption from military service, the sale of Government stores which are no longer required, the contributions made by the Orient Railway Company towards the cost of working those portions of their lines which pass over Bulgarian territory, and, above all, the profit earned by the State on the issue of coin struck for the use of the country in foreign mints. This year the Government intend to have £600,000 coined abroad in silver, and the profit arising from the difference between the cost of production and the price of issue is expected to amount to £188,000.

The expenditure for the year is necessarily based upon problematical estimates. I am assured that the amounts assigned to the various departments of the Administration are largely in excess of the amounts which it is believed will be actually required. The only charge which can be definitely ascertained beforehand is the amount needed for the service of the Public Debt.

This amount seems much larger in figures than it is in reality. The total of £693,496 is made up as follows:—

	£
Pensions	44,000
Tribute to the Porte in respect of Eastern Roumelia ...	118,040
Payment to the Porte for the Vakarel-Bellova Railway ...	2,777
Total ...	164,817

SINKING FUNDS.

	£
Russian indemnity for costs of occupation	100,800
Arrears due to Turkey on Roumelian tribute	20,000
Roumelian loan contracted with Imperial Ottoman Bank	20,000
Varna-Rustschuk Railway Purchase Loan	25,520
6 per cent. Mortgage Loan, 1889	15,400
,, ,, 1892	21,152
Total ...	202,872

Interest on State Loans.

	£
Roumelian Loan	8,000
1888 Loan	106,198
1889 Loan	68,580
1892 Loan	126,912
Total ...	309,690

Costs of Loan.

	£
Commissions and charges for emission	16,117

The loans due to Russia for the cost of the occupation, and to the Porte in respect of the tribute in arrear, due from Eastern Roumelia at the time of her annexation to Bulgaria, are very nearly paid off, as the last instalments become due within a couple of years. The total amount of the other loans are being rapidly diminished by the operation of the Sinking Funds.

The largest item in the estimated expenditure of the year is the sum allotted to the Ministry of War, amounting as it does to close upon £900,000. Considering that there has been no call for military preparation in Bulgaria during the past year, and no likelihood of any such call being made within the present year, this amount may seem large. Examination, however, will show that a very large portion of this expenditure is exceptional. It is the custom of the Government to accompany the Budget with very full explanations as to the modes in which the sums allotted to the various Ministries are to be expended; though, as a matter of fact, each Ministry has power—without the previous consent of the Chamber—to modify the distribution of the special funds voted for its use. The explanations given in connection with the Budget are understood to

represent the sums which, in the opinion of the Minister responsible for the outlay, are likely to provide fully for every kind of expenditure in his department; but they are not considered to be absolute engagements precluding the employment of funds designed for one purpose on some other and more pressing object.

The military expenditure is divided under several heads. The pay list amounts to £427,312; canteens, barracks, and uniforms come to £312,000; sundry charges, comprising an infinite variety of expenses, from officers' travelling expenses to subscriptions towards military clubs, reach a total of £64,600. Expenses of administration are £60,000; arrears due on last year's account, and cost of new buildings, contribute £15,000; and £17,599 is set apart for the reserve fund. There has been no material change in the War Budgets during the seven years which have elapsed since the war with Servia, the largest expenditure being £956,325 in 1890, and the smallest £824,657 in 1891. In addition to the amounts voted for the War Department in the ordinary Budgets, supplementary credits have been granted in well-nigh every year, the funds for which have been provided partly out of the proceeds of the various loans, partly out of the annual surpluses. Last December the Sobranje voted an extraordinary credit of £58,000 for the purchase of repeating rifles. The whole of the exceptional expenditure required to place the army in an effective state is now pretty well completed; and if there is no disturbance of the peace, a very material reduction in the military estimates will, it is expected, be made in a year or two. The Bulgarian army, on a peace footing, consists of about 40,000 soldiers and officers, so that the

cost per head would be about £22 a year. Of course, the permanent staff organization has to be far more elaborate than it would be otherwise, so as to provide for the contingency of the reserves having to be called out.

The second largest item of expenditure is that of the Treasury, which amounts to £680,998. This sum is made up of—

	£
Office salaries	159,176
,, expenses	31,236
Cost of tax collection	33,463
Administration of State domains	9,480
Cost of new coinage	412,000
Sundries	22,321
Reserve fund	13,322
Total	£680,998

As, however, the Government made a profit of £188,000 on the issue of new coinage, struck off at the Mint of Vienna, the above amount ought by rights to be deducted from the cost of the operation. If this deduction is made, the expenditure of 1894 of the Treasury represents a saving of £5683 as compared with that of the preceding year.

Next in amount comes the item of the Public Works Department, which includes the Postal and Telegraph Service. The total expenditure on this department is £516,096, which is divided under the following headings :—

	£
Office salaries	171,099
,, expenses	59,360
Exceptional railway charges	29,330
Payments to foreign railways	58,280
Public roads	48,000
Total	£366,069

	£
Brought forward	366,069
Payment of arrears	2,400
Expenses of State salt works	2,000
Port expenses	2,000
Sofia-Pernik Railway	6,800
Public buildings	123,720
Indemnities	2,666
Reserve fund	10,441
Total	£516,096

The sums allotted to the other departments are distributed in much the same way, and call for no particular comment. It is worth noting that the small deficit of £47,978, which appears in the Budget of 1894, is not left, as it very well might have been left, to be provided for out of the surplus, which there is every reason to expect will be forthcoming at the end of the present year, as in the case of most of its predecessors. Special provision has actually been made to meet the deficit in question by a reduction of 5 per cent. on all salaries paid to officials, either in the military or the civil service. The total amount of the former is £320,000, and of the latter £604,000. It follows, therefore, that a deduction of 5 per cent. makes up some £45,000, and thus practically makes good the deficit, even if the estimates should turn out to be exceptionally correct.

The dominant facts in the financial position of Bulgaria, which have any interest for the outside public, may therefore be resumed as follows:—First, in almost all the ordinary Budgets of the State, the estimated receipts have been greater, and the estimated expenses less, than they proved to be in reality. Secondly, from the period when Eastern Roumelia became incorporated with the Principality, there has been a large balance to the good. Thirdly,

the £4,000,000 which have been spent on exceptional expenditure, such as the war with Servia, the construction of railways, the supply of rolling-stock, the establishment of the National Bank, and the equipment of the army, have been provided to the extent of about £3,000,000 out of the surplus revenue. Lastly, while the normal revenue is about £3,500,000, the total liabilities of the State, as yet accrued, do not exceed £5,500,000, or little more than a year and a half's revenue.

These liabilities, I should add, comprise the capitalized value of the tribute payable to the Porte in respect of Eastern Roumelia, amounting to about £2,000,000; the debt to Russia for the expenses incurred during the occupation, and which is £1,000,000; and two loans contracted in London and Vienna for £1,871,000 and £1,200,000 respectively, which were raised for the purpose of purchasing the Varna-Rustschuk Railway, and of constructing the Zaribrod and Vakarel line. All these loans are being gradually reduced by the operation of the sinking fund system, which has been rigidly adhered to. The Russian and the Turkish indemnities will be finally extinguished when the last instalments are paid off in a very few years' time. It is obvious, therefore, that so far Bulgaria has not laid herself justly open to the charge of lavish expenditure, or of having incurred liabilities which it is not within her power to meet. In their public as well as their private character, the main characteristic of the Bulgarians is an almost penurious parsimony.

It is not very easy to express any positive opinion as to how far the taxation is capable of being increased to any important amount. The population is estimated at three millions and a half, while the taxes are usually of

the same amount, so that the amount of taxation levied, on the average, upon every Bulgarian is exactly a pound a head. This amount cannot certainly be called exorbitant. This revenue, on the other hand, is mainly derived from the land. The land-tax, the returns from the State domains, and the arrears which accrued in previous years, but which have been collected in the course of the year covered by the last Budget, make up £2,500,000, so that only £1,000,000 is contributed by the Customs' duties, the railways, and other State revenues which are not directly derived from the land. As I have already pointed out, the land, in the opinion both of the Government and the country, is already burdened to such an extent as to check the development of its agricultural wealth. Yet, for the reasons previously stated, it is difficult, so long as the Capitulations remain in force, to increase materially the taxes imposed on trade and industry. It follows, therefore, that the normal increase of the revenue must be a slow and irregular process. All persons acquainted with the country concur in the opinion that it possesses resources capable of almost indefinite development. For instance, the soil is very rich, but only a small portion of its productiveness is brought into play by the primitive system of spade industry which is still almost universal. Given improved methods of farming, new agricultural implements, better irrigation, and an increased supply of labour, the land might be made to yield infinitely more than it does at present. But all these improvements require money, and the peasants have little or no money to spare beyond that required for their livelihood, while the State is not in a position to provide the funds required by augmenting the present taxes. Again, there is no doubt

that the construction of railways, the making of roads, and the consequent improvement of the communications between Bulgaria and the outer world would open up fresh markets, would diminish the cost of transport, and would enable the farmers to realize much higher prices for the produce of their land. Unfortunately, railways, roads, and ports involve a large immediate outlay, which, however beneficial it may prove hereafter, cannot be expected to return any adequate profit for some years to come. By the arrangement made with the Vienna Länderbank sufficient funds will be provided to open up the country by the construction of the Sofia-Shumla Railway, and by the improvement of the harbours of Varna and Bourgas. But the amount which has as yet been provided falls far short of what must be required if the country is to be fully developed. The problem, therefore, that Bulgarian statesmanship has to solve is, how to raise money without crushing the country by excessive taxation. It may perhaps be said that the wisest course would be to defer all improvements till the gradual increase of the revenue—which, even under the present unfavourable conditions, is rising slowly but steadily—enables these improvements to be carried out one by one. The State, after all, is only a trader on a large scale ; and in business it commonly pays better to make improvements slowly out of profits earned than rapidly out of money borrowed. Indeed, if Bulgaria were an isolated, out-of-the-way State, such as Denmark, the policy of paying for all improvements out of the current revenue would, I think, commend itself to the economical instincts of the country as well as of the Government. The question, however, which Bulgaria has to decide involves political even more than

economical considerations. Nobody can doubt—at any rate, nobody in Bulgaria's part of the world does doubt—that the Eastern Question is approaching its final solution. Not only the future position but the independent existence of Bulgaria depends upon the character of this solution. If the Principality is, as her people believe, destined to play a leading part in the approaching settlement of the fate of Turkey in Europe, it is all-important that Bulgaria should have developed her great internal resources before the expected crisis comes to pass. Under these circumstances it is intelligible that the Bulgarian people, in spite of their ingrained thrift and caution, should desire to see their country placed in the foremost rank of the States occupying the lands that lie between the Balkans and the Mediterranean, and this object can only be attained by pushing forward the development of Bulgaria's resources. It is possible, therefore, if not probable, that this ambition, based as it is upon a deep national sentiment, may prove stronger amidst the Bulgarians than even their passion for economy.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BANK OF BULGARIA.

In the Alexander Square of Sofia, one of the few handsome buildings is that of the National Bank of Bulgaria. I may also add, it is the only public institution in the place whose name is affixed outside in any other language than Bulgarian.

The origin of the Bank dates from the days of the Russian occupation. It was founded on the system of the State Bank of Russia, which, with this exception, is, I believe, unique in Europe. In the ordinary sense of the words, the National Bank of Bulgaria is not a bank at all, but a department of the Administration, whose functions consist in the issue of notes and treasury bonds, and in loaning money for the development of private or joint stock industries. The Bank has the right to open private accounts with individual customers; but this right has, as yet, been very scantily exercised. The Bank is administered by officials appointed by the Government; it is responsible for the due discharge of its functions to nobody except the Government; and in case of its incurring any liability which it has not the means of meeting, the Government would have to make good the deficiency. The capital of the Bank consists of £400,000, which has been paid by the Government at different times in

instalments derived from the surpluses accruing during the last few years; and it is only this year that the final instalment has been liquidated. By the statutes, 66 per cent. of the profits made in each year belong to the Government, 31 per cent. are placed to a reserve fund, and the balance of 3 per cent. is set apart as a bonus for the officials, by whom the banking business is conducted.

Under these conditions, the Bank ought in theory to be the Treasury of the State, and all payments received on account of revenue should be paid into the Bank, while all payments made by the State should be discharged through its agency. The statutes are based upon this theory, and contain provisions under which the Bank may ultimately become the national exchequer. But up to the present this theory has not been carried out in practice to any very large extent. The taxes and rent due to the State are collected, as a rule, by local agents in the provinces, and paid by them into the provincial treasuries; these treasuries defray the expenses of the provincial administrations out of the proceeds, and only remit the balance, if any, to the central treasury at the seat of Government. The head treasury in its turn defrays out of its own funds all the charges of the central administration, and only pays over the balance to the National Bank. It is obvious, therefore, that the Bank exercises no direct control over the expenditure of the State; and its books only furnish a very inadequate record of the financial transactions of the State. In fact, the accounts, on which the Budget is based, are kept by a completely distinct department, that of the Receiver-General. Such a system might clearly give rise to abuses. The Ministers are alive to this danger; but

they consider that, under the present economical conditions of the country, any complete centralized collection and supervision of the national revenue are impossibilities. Taking into account the difficulties of locomotion, the sparseness of the population, the costliness of travelling, the infinite number of very small amounts which have to be collected by the State, and the equally infinite number of small payments which the State has to make, the local authorities must be allowed for the time being to collect local revenues and make local disbursements. It is hoped, however, that at no remote period the collection and distribution of the whole revenue of the State will pass under the control of the National Bank.

The very large powers conceded to the Bank by the statutes, have indeed been very sparingly employed. Amongst these powers is that of issuing paper money to any extent, provided always that the Bank has in its coffers bullion to the value of one quarter of the amount of notes issued. Originally, the smallest notes issued were twenty francs in value, but recently the minimum value has been reduced to five francs. Yet even at this low figure the demand for notes is extremely limited. Paper money is a complete novelty in Bulgaria, and the people do not take kindly to any novelty. In the rural districts the peasants will only take silver in payment, and even in the towns the traders prefer gold to notes. During my whole sojourn in Sofia I never saw a note of any kind except in money-changers' windows. Up to last Christmas the Bank had only £50,000 worth of notes in circulation; and the gold in their coffers amounted to three or four times this sum. The currency of Bulgaria, I may add, is entirely of foreign production. The coinage is exactly

the same as that of France, the *lev* being, or being supposed to be, identical in value with the franc. So far no gold coins have been issued with the Bulgarian stamp; and the gold in circulation consists exclusively of French and Italian napoleons and half-napoleons. The silver coins, which are of the same denomination as those used in France, have the lion of Bulgaria on one face and the value of the coin inscribed in Bulgarian on the other face. From the look and weight of this silver coinage, I should say that it contains a larger proportion of alloy than French silver of equal nominal value; but the premium on gold is still very small even in the towns. The silver coin, during the first few years, was supplied by the Mint of St. Petersburg, but of late it has been produced at the mints of Vienna and Buda Pesth. The copper coinage, which consists of pieces of ten and five centimes, was manufactured in Holland.

The loaning powers of the Bank have also not been developed with any excessive speed. During the period in which the Bank has been in active operation, the total amount of loans, made either on mortgage or personal security, has been but a little over £1,000,000 sterling. The greater portion of this sum has been advanced to traders and householders in the towns. The holdings of the peasants are, on the average, too small to bear any substantial mortgage. The minimum advance the Bank would consent to make at the outset was £40; but of late, owing to the lack of applications, it has had to reduce this amount to £20. The advances made are supposed not to exceed in any case 40 per cent. of the estimated value of the property mortgaged as regards town loans, and 25 per cent. as regards rural loans. All applications are examined

and all properties are estimated by agents residing in the same locality as the applicants. These agents are paid a small commission upon all business introduced by them, and upon all monies received in repayment of loans. The average interest charged is 8 per cent. Bad debts have, of course, been made in some instances, but the loss on the whole amount advanced by the Bank is estimated not to exceed 4 per cent. of the total. Hitherto the capital of the Bank, small as it is, has been found fully adequate to its requirements; and the manager assured me that if they had a much larger capital at their command they would find it difficult to invest it at once safely and remuneratively, supposing they were obliged, as they are at present, to confine their operations to Bulgaria. The Bank has branches at Varna, Rustschuk, Bourgas, and Philippopolis, and has agencies all over the country. In the course of the last five years, the net profit of the Bank has risen from 781,000 francs in the first year, to 1,333,000 francs in the second, and the average profit has been between 7 and 8 per cent.

I think, therefore, there is every reason to credit the statements made on all sides to the effect that the Bank of Bulgaria is a very well-managed institution. But as there are no shares, it is difficult to say what, according to the test of the local market, is the money-value of the Bank as a property. What impressed me most in the career of the National Bank is the evidence it affords of the cautious and frugal policy pursued by the State in all financial matters. A new country with credit at its disposal is apt to launch out into liberal and even lavish expenditure. But in this, as in most other matters, the policy of Bulgaria is regulated by the instincts of a peasant proprietary. In

order to make this statement clearer, it may be well to cite the last balance sheet of the Bank up to December 31st, 1893, leaving out of account, for the sake of simplicity, all fractions under £1000.

Assets.

	£
Unpaid capital	35,000
Cash in hand	248,000
Bills discounted	322,000
Loans on personal security	30,000
,, mortgages	601,000
Advances to Caisses Agricoles	117,000
,, municipalities	353,000
Accounts current bearing interest	134,000
,, with branch banks	230,000
,, ,, private customers	183,000
,, ,, Treasury	33,000
,, under special conditions	324,000
Deposits	56,000
Advances on State Stocks	253,000
Premium on State Mortgage Debentures	64,000
Buildings and furniture	17,000
Sundries	20,000
Total	£3,020,000

Liabilities.

	£
Capital	400,000
Reserve Fund	88,000
Bank-notes in circulation	49,000
State Mortgage Debentures	399,000
Bills	29,000
Accounts current	194,000
Branch accounts current	192,000
Deposits withdrawable at fixed dates	1,098,000
,, on notice	31,000
Credits opened on guarantees	359,000
Creditors	60,000
Depositors	57,000
Bills re-discounted	17,000
Profit	47,000
Total	£3,020,000

The Profit and Loss Account for last year is composed of the following items:—

DEBIT.

	£
Salaries	12,438
Office expenses	1,440
Rent	282
Postages and telegrams	752
Interest on deposits	60,774
Interest on Sinking Fund of Mortgage Debentures ...	18,751
Depreciation of buildings	289
Sundries	6,951
Total ...	£101,677

CREDIT.

	£
Interest on bills discounted	19,900
,, loans guaranteed by deposit of stocks ...	2,168
,, mortgage loans	47,803
,, loans to Caisses Agricoles and municipalities	36,450
,, special accounts current	22,179
Commission	6,384
Rebate on stamps	115
Exchange	1,985
Sundries	11,797
Total	£148,781

The difference between debits and credits represents the net year's profit of £47,104, which amounts to about 10½ per cent. on the capital of the Bank, as against 10 per cent. in the previous year. This profit, in accordance with the statutes, is divided between the State, the Reserve Fund, and the staff of the Bank in the following proportions:—State profit for 1894, £29,982; Reserve Fund, £15,697; staff of Bank, £1425; total, £47,104.

TRADE OF THE PEASANT STATE.

CHAPTER XIX.

COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY.

In all Bulgaria, it is believed, there are not five millionaires. That is, as everything here is counted in francs, there are not five persons who possess a capital of over £40,000. There are, it is calculated, not fifty whose fortunes, if realized, would exceed £20,000; there are not a couple of hundred whose heirs would have to pay legacy duty on upwards of £5000. This was the estimate given me by one of the leading business men of Sofia. On the other hand, there is hardly a Bulgarian who depends absolutely and entirely for his livelihood upon his daily earnings, and who has not some small income of his own, derived from land, or houses, or cattle. Roughly speaking, therefore, it may be said that there are neither capitalists nor paupers in Bulgaria. Whether this state of things is the ideal condition of humanity I do not pretend to decide. Upon this, as upon most other questions, there is a good deal to be said on both sides. At all events, it is certain that the material development of the country is retarded by the almost complete absence of local capital; and though private fortunes are beginning to increase in amount, it must be a long time before there is any wealthy class in

Bulgaria, able to invest their own surplus funds in the introduction of new trades and the promotion of new industries.

The agent of a number of English mercantile firms complained to me recently that he found it impossible to push business in the Principality. When asked for the reason of his failure, his explanation was that the great mass of the people had absolutely no wants which they could not satisfy for themselves. The Bulgarian peasant needs extremely little, and that little he provides from the produce of his own land. The average cost of a peasant's daily sustenance does not exceed twopence. Their food, during the greater part of the year, consists solely of bread and garlic. Their only beverage is water; not that they have any objection to beer or spirits, but because they object to paying for them. Sheepskins, provided in most cases from their own flocks, form the universal dress of the peasantry. The clothes, both of men and women, are generally home-made. Commonly, they only possess one suit, and they sleep at night in the same clothes as those which they wear during the day. Their beds are mattresses laid on the mud floors of the rooms where they have their meals. On these mattresses the whole family lie huddled together. Even in the towns separate bedrooms are almost unknown. The servants sleep on rugs in the kitchen, and their masters and mistresses are lodged in a way any English artisan, earning good wages, would regard as intolerable. One of the few really handsome houses in Sofia was hired a short time ago by a friend of mine. The house, which is of the class that a London auctioneer would describe as a bijou residence, and which is let for a great deal more than a house of the same class and dimensions would command in South Kensington or Bayswater,

was built, as his own residence, by one of the wealthiest professional men in the town. While being shown over the house by the landlord, the intending tenant's attention was called to the size of the principal bedroom, which he was begged to observe was so roomy that the landlord himself, his wife, his two children, and their nurses were all in the habit of sleeping in it at one and the same time. In a community where so low a degree of comfort is considered sufficient by well-to-do townsfolk of good social position, it is easy to imagine how rough and how hard must be the daily life of the common peasants. Thus, having few material, and no intellectual wants, they are necessarily bad customers. The necessaries of existence lie within their own reach; but as yet they have not a wish for its luxuries. Their daily lives are, to speak the truth, so laborious, so rough, and so penurious, that they even contrive to lay by money. When they have laid it by, they have no idea of spending it so as to improve the conditions under which they live. Their one dominant passion is the hunger for land, and if a peasant sees his way to add an acre or two to his patrimony, he will part with his savings for the purpose.

Indeed, the greed of land is one of the causes which are tending to alter the conditions of Bulgarian existence. When the Tomaks quitted the country, their lands were left vacant. A very large portion of these vacated lands was bought up by the peasants in the neighbourhood, and, in order to complete the purchase money, they had to borrow. Having got the lands, they found they had not the means to work them, and they had to borrow more. The result is that a large number of the peasant farmers are nowadays burdened with loans on which

the interest runs at the rate of twelve per cent. per annum ; and, in order to meet their liabilities, they are finding it necessary to increase the yield of their lands. Still, there is as yet no very general indebtedness, as the great mass of the peasantry live well within their means. They are satisfied if their crops yield sufficient to supply food for themselves and their families. Supposing there is any surplus left, they are willing to sell this surplus, but only at their own price ; and if that price is above the market rates, they would sooner store the grain and let it rot than sell it at what they consider to be a sacrifice.

No capital, therefore, for the development of the lands can be got from the agricultural class ; there is not much more to be got from the trading class. Owing partly to their exemption from direct taxation under the Capitulations, and still more to their superior experience and aptitude, the wholesale trade of the country is very largely in the hands of foreigners, especially of Greeks, Austrians, and Roumanians. The retail trade consists mainly in the sale of articles of a very simple description, almost all of which could be produced in the country at much cheaper rates than those at which they can be imported. There is, therefore, a growing agitation in favour of raising the import duties on all articles which could be manufactured at home. Indeed, I fail to see how a country, situated as Bulgaria is now, can ever develop native industries without some form of protection. But even a protective system cannot create manufactures unless the capital required for their installation is forthcoming ; and, for the present, capital cannot be obtained from native sources.

The Government has made various efforts of late to

promote the development of native industries. For instance, advances have been made by the State to private manufacturers with the view of re-establishing the local silk trade. Silkworms were kept formerly in almost every peasant's house. A few years ago, however, there was a sort of epidemic amidst the grubs; the stock perished, the peasants were unable to procure fresh supplies, and the trade died away. Owing to the assistance of the Government, who advanced money for the purchase of eggs, the house-to-house culture of silkworms has largely revived, and last year some £80,000 worth of silk skeins were exported from Bulgaria. In the same way, great exertions are now being made to restore the cultivation of the vine, which was almost killed for a time by the ravages of the phylloxera. The native wine, which is largely drunk here, is a coarse, wholesome drink, a good deal resembling the inferior brands of Burgundy, and might, I believe, be largely used by French manufacturers at Cette and elsewhere, in the same way as they employ Spanish and Italian wines, to make up the inadequacy of the French vineyards to supply the total amount of Clarets and Burgundies required for foreign exportation.

The State, however, has no large funds at its disposal for the promotion of industrial enterprise; and, even if it had the requisite funds, the subventioning of private undertakings on any important scale would not be in accordance with the frugal and almost parsimonious policy of the Sobranje. The obvious remedy for this state of things would be the development of local industries by the aid of foreign capital. But there are certain difficulties in the way, though rather on the part of the people than of the Government. There is a general conviction in Bulgaria

that the railways ought to be the property of the State; and I doubt whether any foreign company would nowadays obtain a concession to construct a railway on Bulgarian soil. This determination, however, to keep the railways national property is due far more to the unsatisfactory experience of the lines which have hitherto been constructed and owned by foreign companies in Bulgaria, than to any abstract preference for the principle of State ownership. The Bulgarians hold our English idea, or perhaps I ought to say, what used to be our English idea, that the fewer monopolies the State possesses the better, and that private enterprises ought to be conducted by private funds at the profit or loss of the investors, by whom the funds are provided. This commonwealth of peasant proprietors is one of the last countries in Europe in which Socialistic theories as to the proper functions of the State, whatever temporary holding they may obtain on the minds of students in the towns, are likely to influence the course of public legislation. All minerals belong by law to the State, and two or three coal mines are now worked by the Government in order to secure there being always a sufficient supply of coal available for the public service. But the Government are ready to grant concessions to any person, native or foreign, who wishes to work the public mines at his own expense and risk, and for his own profit. Quite recently they have given permission to a private company to work a coal mine adjacent to the State collieries at Pernik.

For the present, however, the only native bodies which have any considerable means at their disposal are the municipalities of the large towns; that is, they are the only corporate bodies who are in a position to raise any

substantial amount on the security of their revenues. Unfortunately, they have all availed themselves of this power to nearly the full extent of their credit, and the money thus raised has been mainly employed in local improvements, which are expected ultimately to pay a good interest on the outlay, but which can yield no immediate return. The municipality of the Capital succeeded, some years ago, in effecting a loan in London to the amount, I believe, of £80,000. The interest upon this loan has hitherto been regularly paid. Great, however, as has been the increase of Sofia under the present reign, the supply of new buildings has temporarily outstripped the demand. Private dwellings are seldom in the market; but, to judge by the number of unoccupied shops and stores in the streets, the increase of local trade has not kept up with the growth of the population. At any rate, the building fund of the municipality has been pretty well exhausted for some time past, and the construction of a number of important public works has had to be postponed owing to the lack of money. The municipality tried lately to raise a second loan abroad, but so far its efforts have not been attended with success. The provincial municipalities are very much in the same financial position as that of the metropolis, with the exception that, their credit being less, their debts, which consist mainly of loans from the National Bank, are smaller in proportion.

It is thought at Sofia, that foreign capitalists might be prepared to find funds to construct tramways, gas and sewage works, and telephones, and carry out other local improvements on joint account with the municipality. In theory this idea is feasible, but I doubt its working well in practice. All the foreigners I have met, who have had

business relations with the Bulgarian municipalities, assert that their experience has not been altogether satisfactory. They do not allege any absolute breach of faith, but they declare that the municipal authorities were always trying to get the best of their bargain, to cut down the profit of the contractor on one plea or another, and to sail, in fact, as close to the wind as is consistent with not absolutely repudiating their liabilities. A German contractor in large practice, who had built several of the principal public edifices in the capital, and many of the schools in the provinces, complained recently in my hearing of the parsimony of the local authorities and of their sharp practice. He could never, he said, obtain sufficient credits to do his work properly ; he always had a fight to obtain the price formally agreed upon. Once while building a theatre, he received orders from the municipality not to complete the building in the form originally proposed, because the cost already incurred was so far in excess of the estimates. Upon this he sent in his account, in which, in accordance with the terms of his contract, he charged 5 per cent. on the cost of construction, which had been calculated at £9000, so that he would have had to receive commission amounting to £450. In reply he received an order for £400, on the ground that the actual outlay, instead of being £9000, was only £8000. Again, while he was constructing the Exhibition Building at Philippopolis, he was asked by the authorities to go to Vienna in order to study the Exhibition buildings there. On sending in the account for his travelling expenses, payment of the amount was refused on the plea that the charge was not included in the original contract. He added that when he had to furnish plans and specifications

to the communal authorities for the construction of parish schools, he always found it advisable to make the dimensions larger than was really necessary. He did this, not because he had any personal interest in increasing the amount expended, but because this was the only way in which he could provide the required school accommodation, as the commune invariably cut down the dimensions suggested in his plans without asking his advice. This sort of conduct is so consistent with peasant nature all the world over, that I am disposed to believe these complaints have some foundation in fact, though I have no doubt the local authorities would have a good deal to say on their side concerning their various disputes with contractors.

The only class of persons who I think are likely to make money by engaging in building speculations in partnership with the local authorities are small contractors, who are content to reside on the spot, and to look themselves after the employment and the repayment of their own money. It is obvious that contractors of this kind do not belong to the class of capitalists who could carry out the general development of the country on the scale required by its urgent necessities. Under these conditions, the best way for a country possessing very large material resources, but lacking the capital required to turn its undeveloped wealth to advantage, is to allow its native industries to be assisted and controlled by foreign capital. Foreigners, by the law of Bulgaria, enjoy, both in an individual and in a corporate capacity, the same privileges as the natives of the country in as far as trade and industry are concerned. Indeed, so long as the Capitulations remain in force, they are placed, as I have pointed out, in an

exceptionally favoured position as compared with the natives. It is obvious that any important introduction of foreign capital must tend to modify greatly the present economic conditions of the country. Whether this would be a gain or a loss to Bulgaria is an open question. The laws, however, which regulate human existence, render it absolutely certain, that where on the one hand there is a country which has great resources and little capital, and where, on the other hand, there is any amount of foreign capital in adjacent countries on the look-out for lucrative investments, the capital will flow into the country and the country will welcome the capital. As things stand the probability seems to be that the exploitation of Bulgaria will fall into the hands of Austria, which has now got command of the Bulgarian markets. Whether this is to be so or not, must depend upon the action of the other European capital-possessing countries, and especially of England.

In 1887 England held the foremost place in the Bulgarian market. At that period British goods were imported into the principality to the value of £1,354,500 ; in the year 1891 this amount had declined to £786,400 ; since then it has gone on declining. Yet within the same period our exports of cereals from Bulgaria have risen from £768,000 to £940,400. Thus, while we have purchased £172,400 more from Bulgaria, we have sold her £568,100 less. The chief customers of Bulgaria are Great Britain, France, Turkey, and Austria. Within the above period the imports of France have sunk from £235,600, while her exports have risen from £760,000 to £1,364,400. Turkey again shows a decrease both in imports and exports, the former having fallen from £698,000 to £491,600, and the latter from £2,320,000 to £964,800. The falling off in the

trade of Bulgaria with the above-named countries has, however, been made up by the increase in her trade with Austria. In this case, the imports, which were only £1,061,200 in 1887, were £1,671,300 in 1891, while the exports remain the same. This change in the course of Bulgarian trade may be accounted for to some extent by the general causes which have almost extinguished British commerce throughout the whole of the Levant. The English merchants who trade with Bulgaria, I am assured on every side, will not take the trouble to hunt up business; they have either no local representatives here at all, or employ strangers unacquainted with the language and customs of the country; and they refuse to do business except upon the old-fashioned system of cash on delivery. The result is that they are undersold by Austrian and Greek traders, who are more energetic, less particular, and more easily contented with a small profit. I think, however, the chief explanation of the falling off in British trade is that, since the direct Constantinople and Vienna line has been completed, Austria has become the natural mart of Bulgaria. After all, Austrian manufacturers and traders can deliver their goods in the Principality under present conditions far more cheaply than their English competitors; and so long as this remains the case, they must inevitably command the pick of the Bulgarian market. When, however, the railways I have spoken of are completed, the conditions of trade will be materially altered. With direct and cheap railway communication between the seaports of Bulgaria and the interior of the country, English goods shipped to Varna or Bourgas could be delivered in the inland towns at much lower rates. English wares are still preferred by the Bulgarians to

German goods; and if they could be delivered as rapidly and as cheaply they would meet with a ready sale. There is, therefore, reason to hope that the decline of our trade with Bulgaria is temporary and not permanent.

The following statistics, which have recently been published, give, I believe, an accurate account of the various industrial enterprises as yet established in Bulgaria. There are already—

54 woollen factories.
28 cotton mills.
1206 cord and string works.
8 distilleries.
66 steam and water mills.
17 breweries.
2 dyeing works.
23 saw-mills.
23 wool-carding works.
92 cigar and cigarette factories.
2 snuff factories.
3 pottery works.
36 printing offices.
8 soap works.
1 silk factory.
2 ink manufactories.
2 powder mills.
2 paste manufactories.
1 basket factory.
55 tanneries.
16 flax works.

Thus in a country of over 3,500,000 inhabitants there are only 1647 factories or works of any kind important enough to deserve recording, even in a list published in the official organ of the Government, and intended to demonstrate the great industrial progress which has been made of late years. It may be added that of these 1647 factories, 1206 are small rope walks, so that there are only 641 factories which in our use of the word would be deemed worthy of being so described.

In the opinion of its inhabitants the undeveloped resources of the country constitute a source of great potential wealth. All the statements made on this subject to a foreign visitor should be qualified by a remembrance of the fact that the mineral resources of the country have never yet been scientifically investigated, so that the authors of these statements are hardly in a position to form any

trustworthy opinion as to the real value of the riches they believe to lie buried beneath the Bulgarian soil. I should therefore hesitate to assume the present State to be quite the "Tom Tiddler's ground" it is sometimes represented as being. But I think there is reasonable ground for supposing that agriculture is not ultimately destined to be the sole, or even the chief source, of the national revenue. As to the fertility of their soil, the Bulgarians can speak from personal experience. From M. Stambouloff downwards there is hardly a public man in the country who has not been born and bred, so to speak, on the land, and who is not personally interested in farming operations. Roughly speaking, Bulgaria may be described as a series of vast plains intersected by the precipitous ranges of the Balkan Mountains. These ranges protect the country from the cold north winds which, during the long winter months, sweep over the flat steppes, stretching without interruption from the Danube to the Arctic Ocean. On the other hand, in this low latitude the sun is very powerful even when the hills are covered with snow. Though there are no large rivers in Bulgaria, the country-side is well watered by the countless streams which trickle down from the mountains into the plains. The soil is soft and rich, and easily tilled, up to a short depth, by spade labour. Spring and autumn are not as marked here as they are in other lands. Winter blossoms into summer and summer fades into winter without any long interval of transition. The seed sown in the late autumn is not exposed to the vicissitudes of climate so familiar to the British farmer. The departure of the snow is followed by the heavy spring rains; and as soon as the summer arrives the plains that only a few days before looked bleak and bare are covered,

as if by magic, with rich crops of wheat, barley, maize, and hay, and, in the southern districts, of rice and tobacco. The plateau on which the major part of Bulgaria stands is so elevated that even in the height of the summer the nights are fresh and dew falls in the morning. In consequence the burning heats and the droughts, which wither up the crops in countries of like latitude, but of lower elevation, are here unknown. So large a portion of the soil is still not brought into tillage that there is any amount of pasture land. Both the climate and the fodder are favourable to the production of flocks and herds. Cattle, horses, buffaloes, sheep, goats, and pigs are to be found in immense numbers. But owing to the general economical conditions of the State there are few graziers on a large scale; and though the aggregate quantity of herds and flocks is very high, the number of beasts owned by individual proprietors is small in comparison. Silkworms are now very largely reared in the peasants' homes; and in Roumelia the rose farms, from which the attar of roses is produced, cover a great extent of country. I see no reason, therefore, to question the universal belief of the Bulgarians, that with improved methods of tillage, increased supply of labour, and the introduction of outside capital, the agricultural yield of their land is capable of immense development. It is not so easy to form a judgment as to the alleged mineral wealth of Bulgaria. I am assured that the Balkan Mountains contain a large number of quartzite reefs; alluvial gold is also found in some of the mountain streams. There is ample evidence of the existence of gold, silver, copper, and other minerals in the country. But as the regions in which these minerals are supposed to be located have never been really prospected, it is

impossible to say whether the metals in question are to be found in paying quantities or could be extracted at a price which would leave a profit. It is certain, however, that both iron and coal are to be found in large quantities throughout the country. If these minerals could not be obtained elsewhere, Bulgaria could provide a more than sufficient supply of coal and iron for her own use out of her own soil. There are a few coal and iron mines already at work, which do fairly well, and would do much better with larger capital, better machinery, and improved facilities of transport. The coal from the State colliery of Pernik is sold in Sofia at about ten francs a ton. It is of inferior quality, and is more like slag than English coal; still it throws out great heat, and has completely driven out the use of wood fires in the Capital. In those parts of the country, however, which are not close to a railway, the cost of coal, owing to the difficulty of transport, is so great that it is very little used. As the country is opened up by the various railroads now in course of construction, the freight for coal from the seaports must obviously become materially cheaper; and I am not quite certain whether the coal of Bulgaria is of sufficiently good quality to stand competition with English coals, which might easily be brought into the country if the rates of inland freight from the sea-coast did not virtually prohibit their importation. I am told that in the north of the province there are coal seams, the quality of which is quite equal to that of the English article. But the evidence on which this statement rests is not very conclusive; and till the question is settled one way or the other, it is impossible to say whether Bulgaria is likely, within any reasonable time, to become a great coal and iron producing country.

CHAPTER XX.

RAILWAYS.

THE most pressing want of Bulgaria is the development of railway communication. The ranges of the Balkan Mountains, which traverse the country in well-nigh every direction until you reach the lowlands of Eastern Roumelia, practically divide one district from another by obstacles that are not easily surmountable. The large towns are still very few in number; and such high-roads as there are were constructed rather for military purposes than for providing means of access from town to town and village to village. The country is very rich in agricultural produce, and this richness is held to be capable of almost indefinite development. The produce of the fields cannot, however, be sold to advantage owing to the cost and delay in exporting it to foreign markets. The peasants, therefore, have no great interest in growing more produce than they can either use themselves or sell in their immediate neighbourhood. The obvious remedy for this state of things is the construction of railroads. When railroads are once made roads will follow of themselves.

At present, Bulgaria is traversed by two main lines of railway, both going from east to west and having no connection with each other. The first and oldest is the

Varna-Rustschuk Railroad, which was built some five and twenty years ago by an English company, and was constructed in order to provide direct and rapid access to Constantinople from Western Europe, not with much idea of developing the then almost dormant resources of the country which it traversed. The line in question did not prove a financial success, and there were any number of disputes between the English company and the Porte. By the Treaty of Berlin, Bulgaria was compelled to take over all the liabilities contracted by the Ottoman Government in respect of this unfortunate railway. After protracted negotiations the Varna-Rustschuk line became the property of the State at a cost of £1,876,000, which was raised by a six per cent. State loan; so that, taking into account the price at which the bonds given in exchange for the loan were issued and the cost of commission, the purchase must have cost Bulgaria not far short of £2,000,000. As the line is only a hundred and forty miles in length, it follows that it was bought at the average price of £14,000 a mile; not a bad price for a line which up to then had barely paid its working expenses. I am well aware that there were large arrears claimed by the company in respect of payments which were said to be due from Turkey and to be in default. I have no reason to assert that the arrangement was an unfair one for either side under the circumstances. Still it is only just to the Bulgarians to record the fact that some two-fifths of her small public debt is due to the enforced purchase of a line owned by a foreign company, and sold by them under a forced sale at a price very considerably above its marketable value.

By the Railway Convention, concluded at Vienna in

1888, between Turkey, Austria, Servia, and Bulgaria, the last-named State agreed to construct the Zaribrod-Vakarel Railway, which formed the final connecting link in the direct line between Constantinople and Vienna. This line was completed in 1889, at a cost of £1,200,000, which was provided for by a fresh loan of like amount. Unlike the Varna-Rustschuk Railway, the last-named line was of immense service to Bulgaria, as it placed her in direct communication with Western Europe, and above all with Austria.

I do not know that there is any special reason for discussing in these pages the rights or wrongs of the Orient Railways question, though it is naturally one which excites very great local interest. It is enough to say that these railways, which are supposed to be the origin of Baron Hirsch's colossal fortune, though they do supply the great want of a direct route between the Bosphorus and the Danube, supply it in a way which has given very general dissatisfaction to the districts traversed. They are said, whether justly or not, to have been very badly constructed, to have cost a great deal more than was necessary, and to have followed a studiously circuitous track so as to lengthen the distances traversed and increase the cost of freight and transport. No doubt, the political and financial embarrassments of Turkey rendered the construction of the lines in question far more costly than it need have been; it is obvious, too, that if the work had to be begun *de novo*, a more direct and shorter route would be adopted. But more than this it would be difficult to affirm with any degree of certainty. What can be asserted with more confidence is, that the joint system, under which the line is worked at present, is eminently unsatisfactory to

Bulgaria. The part of the line constructed by Baron Hirsch was sold, after various vicissitudes, to a company called the Orient Railways Company, which I believe is nominally a Swiss company, having its head office at Zurich, but the capital of which was mainly subscribed by Viennese capitalists. The Orient Railways Company works the line between Constantinople and Sarembey, the distance between the latter place and the Turkish frontier at Mustapha Pasha being close on 130 miles. This company also works the Tirnovo-Jamboli branch, a distance of nearly sixty-six miles, running throughout over Bulgarian territory, and connecting at Jamboli with a line to the port of Bourgas, which was constructed by Bulgaria at her own expense. Again, the main line from Sarembey to the Servian frontier is partly leased, partly owned, and in either case worked by Bulgaria. Adding to the above a short line between Sofia and Pernik, the Principality contains in all 512 miles of railway, of which 317 are worked by the State and 195 by the Orient Railways Company. The Bulgarian Government is naturally anxious to get these private lines under its own management. It is contended at Sofia that these lines are worked—and very properly so—with the view of yielding the largest and immediate return to the shareholders, not with a view of developing the resources of the country; and that, by the introduction of lower freights and increased facilities, they might be made infinitely more beneficial to the community, without any loss beyond a temporary diminution of income. The company, I fancy, are willing to lease the portion of their lines running over Bulgarian territory to the State; but they will only do so at a price based on their prospective rather than their actual value; and this price the

Bulgarians, rightly or wrongly, deem exorbitant. This natural divergence of view between sellers as distinguished from buyers has created a good deal of irritation between the Bulgarian Government and the Orient Railways Company, and this irritation is augmented by the accidental circumstance that the Turkish Government has the right of interfering in any arrangement concluded between the two contracting parties.

Only the other day an incident occurred in connection with this railway question, which shows how strangely industrial and international considerations are mixed up in this part of the world. By the original agreement between Bulgaria and the Orient Railways Company the point, west and east of which the main line traffic is worked respectively by the State and by the company, was fixed at the station of Bellova, some fifteen miles east of Sofia. This station lies in a narrow gap, through which the line passes between a range of hills that separates the plateau of Sofia from the plains of Philippopolis. There is no room in this gap to enlarge the station in question, which, owing to the rapid increase of traffic, has become inconveniently small. Constant delays and difficulties have arisen at Bellova from the absence of additional sidings, and on several occasions accidents have been caused by the block of trains at Bellova, which in one or two instances have been attended with fatal results. In order to remedy this inconvenience the Bulgarian Government proposed to remove the point of junction, at which the management of the service is taken over by the State, from Bellova to Sarembey, a station about six miles east of the former place, and which lies in the open plain beyond the gap, and can, if necessary, be enlarged to any amount desired.

The result of this arrangement was that the section of the line between Bellova and Sarembey would have in future to be worked by the State instead of by the company. The arrangement was obviously advantageous to both parties; the company raised no objection to the proposed transfer or to the terms upon which it was to be effected. The transfer, however, though agreed upon by both parties, could not be carried out without the formal consent of the Porte. The Turkish Government had no personal interest in the proposed change, and was perfectly willing to accept the principle on which it was based. Unfortunately, for some time past Bulgaria had been out of favour with the Porte. The mere fact that the transfer was desired at Sofia caused it to be viewed with suspicion at Constantinople ; and, in spite of repeated promises to attend to the matter, the Porte could not be induced to sign the formal decree authorizing the contemplated working arrangement. At last the Government of Bulgaria lost all patience, and one fine morning, in the early part of the present year, it cut the gordian knot by taking possession of the section in question and placing its own officials in charge of the Sarembey station. I am assured that this sort of miniature *coup d'état* was carried through by M. Petkoff, the Minister of Public Works, without the sanction or even the knowledge of his colleagues. This action of the Government was extremely popular in Bulgaria ; and in all likelihood the Porte would have acquiesced, as it always does acquiesce in an accomplished fact, if difficulties had not been raised in an entirely different quarter. The Orient Railways Company, though it was quite willing to agree to the principle of the proposed transfer, could not reasonably be expected

to approve so high-handed a measure, which might hereafter constitute a precedent for a summary seizure of any portion of their lines. The shareholders in the company are mainly Viennese capitalists and Austrian grandees, who have great personal influence at the Imperial Court. Immediately upon M. Petkoff's action becoming known, the representative of the Austro-Hungarian Government at Sofia was instructed to enter a strong protest against any forcible settlement of the Bellova-Sarembey controversy, as constituting a violation of the rights of its subjects. Bulgaria has every motive for keeping on good terms with Austria, and on the Ministry being informed of this protest having been made, they showed their good sense by receding immediately from an untenable position, and withdrawing their officials from the Sarembey station. In consideration of this concession, Austria brought strong pressure to bear at Constantinople, and induced the Sultan to sanction an arrangement, in virtue of which the working of the Sarembey-Bellova section has now been taken over by Bulgaria from the Orient Railways Company for a period of five years, on terms which are mutually satisfactory. This arrangement, by the way, includes an annual payment of £80 a kilometre for the lease of another section of the line west of Bellova, the title to which has been for some time matter of dispute between the Governments of Bulgaria and Turkey, and which, pending the settlement of this dispute, had been taken possession of by the Government of Sofia.

It is not only in connection with the Orient Railways Company that the political history of Bulgaria is curiously associated with railway questions. The story of the Varna-

Rustschuk Line, as it was told me, throws a curious light on the way things were managed in Bulgaria during the Turkish era. The original concession for the construction of this line was obtained from the Porte by a Levantine merchant. He took the concession to London and succeeded in selling it to a syndicate, who sold it again to an English company formed to build and work the line. The Board, on which there was a brother of Mr. Gladstone, was a good one enough in itself; but the British public did not subscribe largely, and the actual share capital of the company was extremely small. This, however, was not a matter of much importance. By the concession the company were authorized to issue a certain number of debentures for every kilometre constructed, on which interest at the rate of seven per cent. was guaranteed by the Ottoman Government. In those days, some thirty odd years ago, the British public still believed in the regeneration of Turkey; and seven per cent. debentures, guaranteed by the Porte, were regarded as an excellent investment. The debentures were placed without difficulty, and the line was duly constructed. Up to the period when the railway was opened for traffic, the interest, in accordance with the terms of the concession, was paid out of capital, and things went well as far as the market was concerned. But from the outset the line was mismanaged; the gradients were bad, the rolling-stock was inadequate, the expenses were far in excess of the estimates, and, if local report is at all correct, the company was overcharged in every way in the course of the construction of the line. Not long after the new grand international route between the West and the East, *viâ* the Danube, the Black Sea, and the Varna-Rustschuk Railway, had been thrown open to

the public, there occurred the great financial crisis, which knocked down all Turkish securities, and which, at the time, was almost as disastrous to the British investor as the collapse of Argentina three years ago. There proved to be little or no traffic in the districts traversed by the railway. Here, as elsewhere in Turkey, the absence of roads and the insecurity of property paralyzed all local production not required to supply the producers' own wants. The Bulgarian peasant had no object in growing wheat for export to Europe, when the cost of transport would probably eat up all his profit, and when the fact of his being able to export wheat at all would certainly have increased the amount exacted from him by the farmers of the imperial taxes. It is true that the particular district traversed by the Varna-Rustschuk Railway was almost exclusively inhabited by Mahommedans ; but in the exaction of taxes the Turkish Government, to do it justice, recognized no difference of creed. The through traffic over the line barely paid its working expenses, and the administration of this remote railway by an English board, sitting in London, was at once costly and incompetent. The traffic returns from the enterprise proved insufficient to pay the debenture interest ; and when the Porte, in accordance with the concession, was called upon to make up the deficit, it repudiated the liability on the plea that the line had not been so constructed as to satisfy the conditions of the contract. The endless disputes between the railway company and the Porte are recorded in the archives of the Foreign Office for whosoever may care to read them. It is enough for me to say that, whichever of the two parties to the controversy was most in the right or least in the wrong, the Porte had always the best of

the argument, as it simply declined to pay the guarantee, while the company, even if right in principle, had no practical power to enforce the payment of its claims. In despair of coming to any arrangement, the company accepted an offer of Baron Hirsch, then at the height of his prestige as the railway king of Turkey in Europe. The bargain was a one-sided one. After the first year of its operation, the company got no return of any kind from the undertaking, though, as they alleged, Baron Hirsch, who leased the line without paying any rent, and was paid so much a kilometre for working it, earned a handsome profit out of the difference between what he spent in working expenses and what he received as an indemnity for working the line. Even if this is so, all that can fairly be said is that the English company made a bad bargain and the Baron made a good one. When the conference met at Berlin to settle the terms of peace between Russia and Turkey, strong influence was exerted in some quarter or other to protect the interests of the debenture-holders of the Varna-Rustschuk Railway. One of the conditions of the treaty under which Bulgaria was to be granted autonomy was to the effect that the Principality must effect the purchase of this ill-starred line. There were any number of further delays and disputes as to how this engagement should be carried out in practice. Finally, as I have said, the Bulgarian Government raised a loan, out of whose proceeds the debenture-holders were paid off, and the State became proprietor of the line. Unfortunately for the original debenture-holders and shareholders, they had long lost faith in ever getting anything out of the concern, and had mostly sold their holdings for whatever they could get. Meanwhile Baron Hirsch had

gradually bought up all the stock thrown on the market, so that when the purchase price was finally handed over to the company on liquidation, a very small portion of the amount found its way into the pockets of the original investors. In as far as I can learn, the Varna-Rustschuk line, under State management, about covers its expenses; but I should doubt its yielding anything like the interest which the country has to pay upon the loan raised for the completion of the purchase.

Though Bulgaria finally carried her point with reference to the Bellova-Sarembey question, the whole relations between the State and the Orient Railways Company are necessarily unsatisfactory from a native point of view. No independent country can like the principal portions of the main railway route across her own territory remaining in the hands of a foreign company under the special protection of two adjacent empires; and a strong feeling is entertained in the Principality that the Bulgarian sections of this main line ought by rights to be taken over by the State. It is thought that if this should be found impossible, a competing State line should be constructed, so as to secure full control of the railway communication between the East and the West. On this account a proposal has been discussed for the construction of a new line from Bellova to the Turkish frontier at Mustapha Pasha. It is asserted that such a line might be made far more cheaply and far more directly than the present zigzag route of the Orient Railways, the gradients of which are so steep, and the curves so sharp, that even the express trains cannot travel much over twenty miles an hour. This project may possibly be carried out at some future period. For

the present, however, Bulgaria has far too much need of new railroads in other directions to spend her money in constructing lines intended to compete with those already in existence. A somewhat more practical project is that of constructing a direct line between Sofia and Jamboli, which would be some hundred kilometres shorter than the present circuitous route by Tirnova. Some few months ago overtures were made to eminent railway contractors in England with the view of inducing them to undertake the construction of this line, but I am not aware whether these overtures ever went beyond the preliminary stage of negotiation. The main object of the projected line was, I fancy, to bring pressure to bear on the Orient Railways Company. A direct Sofia-Jamboli line, whether it paid or not, would command the whole traffic between the port of Bourgas and the West, and would thus deprive the Orient Company, which owns the line between Semlin-Tirnova, and Jamboli, of a very profitable portion of its traffic. It is thought probable that the prospect of incurring such a loss might induce the shareholders of the company to entertain the idea of selling or leasing their Bulgarian lines to the State at a more moderate price than that they have hitherto demanded.

For the present, the great railway need of Bulgaria is direct communication between the north and south of the country. As between east and west communication is fairly well provided by the Orient Railway and the Rustschuk-Varna line. Between these two lines, however, there is no railway connection of any kind. If you want to go from Sofia to Rustschuk, a distance, as the crow flies, of not over a hundred and fifty miles, you must either go to Constantinople or to Bourgas by rail, proceed

thence by steamer to Varna, and recross Bulgaria by rail to Rustschuk ; or if you prefer to go entirely by land, you have to make an enormous detour by Belgrade, Zegedin, Orsova, and Bucharest to Giurjevo, a town just opposite to Rustschuk on the northern bank of the Danube.

Again, there is no direct connection between Bulgaria and the Ægean Sea. You must either go to Constantinople and take boat thence to Salonika, or you must make a very circuitous journey through Servia and the Herzegovina. In order to remedy these inconveniences, the Bulgarian Government propose to make a line which will place Salonika, Sofia, Rustschuk, and Varna in direct railway communication with each other. The portion south of Sofia is now in course of construction. The line from Salonika to Monastir is already finished, and on the Bulgarian side a commencement has been made by the opening of the first section of the proposed railway as far as Pernik, some fifteen miles south of the capital. I am told that there are no great engineering difficulties in the completion of the connecting link between Pernik and the point where the line is to pass out of Bulgarian territory.

A far more difficult section of the proposed line is that which is to proceed northwards from Sofia, and which is finally to end close to Shumla, a station on the Varna-Rustschuk line. Any number of mountain ranges will have to be traversed, and, as the route taken must necessarily follow the lie of the valleys between the hills, the line will be circuitous and costly. No complete survey has, I believe, yet been finished, so that the estimated amount of the cost is still uncertain. But, assuming no political complication should occur, Bulgaria's financial position

is such as to enable her to raise the required capital without difficulty ; and within a few years Sofia will no longer be cut off, as she is at present, from the northern provinces of the Principality and the banks of the Danube. The line in question will pass through coal regions which are supposed to be extremely rich, and its construction will certainly give a much-needed impetus both to local industry and to foreign trade.

SOCIAL LIFE OF THE PEASANT STATE.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CAPITAL.

AT the railway station of Sofia there is displayed on the walls a huge map of the countries traversed by the Orient Line. On this map, which was compiled, I should fancy, about twenty years ago, you will find some score of names, showing the position of the principal towns of Bulgaria, but the capital, Sofia, is not amongst the number. The explanation is that the present metropolis of the State was too insignificant a place in those days to have its name recorded. I could never meet with any very satisfactory explanation as to why this place was chosen above all others as the Capital of the country. It is not associated with any of the historical traditions of the era, apocryphal or otherwise, when Bulgaria was a great and independent Empire. It stands on no considerable river ; it is not a strong military position ; it is not the seat of any great trade or industry ; and at the period of its selection it was not particularly convenient of access. It had, undoubtedly, the negative advantage of being surrounded by a purely Bulgarian population, with a very small admixture of the Mussulman element. It also lay upon the great military high-road between Constantinople

and the West. The most probable explanation is, that at the period when Bulgaria recovered her independence, Sofia, which was then a small town of some six thousand inhabitants, happened to be one of the chief seats of the Turkish administration. Tirnovo, the ancient capital, was and is almost inaccessible, owing to the absence of roads and railways, whereas Sofia was clearly on the route which the line from Vienna to Constantinople would have to follow. Rustschuk, which, as the abode of the old Governors-General, was the natural capital, was not considered suitable, owing to the fact that it lay in the centre of a district in which the Mussulman element was predominant. Everything at that period had to be done in a hurry; there was no time to pick and choose; and as the Turkish Pashas, Cadis, and Bashi-Bazouks took their departure from Sofia, the Bulgarians found ready to their hand the residences and offices which the Ottoman authorities had previously occupied.

Anyhow the choice of a capital, by whatever motives it may have been dictated, has not proved to be a bad one. The town stands on a rolling plain some two thousand feet above the sea, encompassed in almost every direction by the ranges of the Balkan Mountains. The result is, that at the end of almost every street in the town you have vistas of lofty, precipitous hills, clad, for the most part, with snow during the long winter, and which, in this clear sparkling air, seem so near at hand as to lie almost at the gates of the city. As a matter of fact, the plateau on which Sofia stands extends for miles in every direction before you reach the foot of the mountains. Thus, there is almost indefinite space available for the expansion of the city, supposing its development in the

future to correspond with its growth in the recent past. A new city has, in the course of a very few years, been created upon the ruins of the old, squalid Turkish town. The dominant idea which seems to have regulated the construction of Sofia has been a determination to efface all traces of the Turkish era and to found a modern capital, built in conformity with the ideas, customs, and fashions of Western civilization. The process of transformation was commenced in the reign of Prince Alexander, who built a residence for himself on the foundations of the dwelling occupied by the Turkish Governors, and also constructed the blocks of public buildings surrounding the public gardens, which lie at the gate of the royal dwelling. The palace itself is situated at the highest point of the low hillock on which the town is placed, and, in consequence, all streets emerging from the Alexander Square slope downwards in every direction towards the plain. The process of reconstruction was retarded for a time by the diplomatic troubles between the Russian Protectorate and the protected State, by the war with Servia, and by the intrigues which culminated in Prince Alexander's resignation. The descriptions of Sofia, which were written by travellers who visited the city during Prince Alexander's reign, dwell mainly—and I have no doubt with perfect justice—upon the startling contrast between the European quarter and the Turkish quarter, lying close at hand, with its narrow, ill-lit, unpaved, and squalid streets. At present this contrast is no longer visible, owing to the simple fact that the Turkish quarter has been almost improved off the face of the earth.

As soon as Prince Ferdinand had become firmly seated on the throne, the reconstruction of Sofia was again taken

in hand. I should doubt any very definite plan having been laid out for the rebuilding of the city. The old town was pulled down street by street, block by block, and house by house, and in lieu of the narrow Turkish alleys, broad avenues were carried in every direction without much regard to their correlation to each other. Thus, when you look down upon the town from any of the surrounding heights, Sofia has somewhat the look of a huge starfish, the centre being the palace, and the claws consisting in a number of avenues stretching out into the plain, these avenues being connected with each other by any number of side streets running at all sorts of angles.

Architecturally, Sofia has little or no pretensions. The houses are all of brick encased in stucco. The width of the thoroughfares, the monotony of the endless rows of detached villas, the scrubby trees planted along the foot-walks, and the shabby-genteel air inseparable from stucco in every form and phase, reminded me frequently of the non-artistic districts of St. John's Wood. Palace, public buildings, private dwellings, are all fashioned after the model of the house which children are first taught to draw, a rectangular parallelogram, with a broad slit in the middle for the doorway, and with any number of narrow slits for the windows in the façade. Except in a few streets of the business quarter, the houses do not adjoin each other, but stand apart. Hardly any house is more than two stories in height : most of them consist of one story only. They all stand in a plot of ground of their own, but gardens are few and far between ; the places where one might expect to find a garden are occupied by outhouses. Except in two or three of the main streets, the process of reconstruction is still incomplete. Every now and then

the broad, smooth, flag-stone pavements are intersected by stretches of unpaved ground, filled up with rubble and loose stones, which a shower of rain converts, for the time being, into a quagmire. Here and there, too, sandwiched in between the modern stucco villas, are groups of old-fashioned Turkish houses, half cottages, half shanties, with white-washed walls and broad, red-tiled roofs.

From a painter's point of view the tumble-down, squalid old town was infinitely preferable; but, from the point of view of people who have to pass their lives in Sofia, the present is doubtless superior to the past. Sofia has, in fact, been converted into a very fair specimen of a well-to-do, commonplace Western city. The streets, unlike those of Eastern towns, are all named, mostly after the local celebrities of the era of Liberation, and the houses are all regularly numbered. The main thoroughfares are wide and well paved with macadam. The footwalks in every part of the town are excellent, except for the gaps I have just spoken of; and before long Sofia will be as well constructed a capital, for its size, as any to be found in Europe. At night the town is lit with oil lamps; by night as by day the streets are singularly quiet and orderly. The private houses, though homely, are comfortable. The sanitary arrangements are still of a primitive kind. I am by no means sure, however, that they are not more conducive to health than the elaborate system of water-drainage which is to be substituted in their place, when a contract, already made for supplying Sofia with an adequate supply of water, is carried into effect.

It has been my fortune to witness the birth and growth of many cities in the New World and in our Colonies. But I do not know that either Denver city in Colorado, or

Ottawa in Canada, or Johannesburg in South Africa are more noteworthy achievements of individual enterprise than this city of Sofia, with its boulevards, mansions, public buildings, parks, and kiosks, all on a small scale but adequate to its requirements. What adds to the marvel of the achievement is, that the scene, on which it has been accomplished in the course of some half-dozen years, lies in the centre of a remote and out-of-the-way district which, till the other day, was, as it had remained for centuries, one of the most backward and neglected provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The funds required for the construction of the capital were mainly supplied by the municipality, who borrowed the money for the purpose by a loan, raised on the security of the octroi duties. The money thus earned was spent right and left in the development of the new town. Two million francs were expended in constructing a new Turkish bath, though the old one was good enough for the present demand. Three million francs, too, were voted to build an Hôtel de Ville, the foundations of which have been dug in the Central Square, but the work has been suspended owing to funds not being forthcoming for its completion. In this, as in other ways, there was undoubtedly a good deal of waste, and probably a certain amount of jobbery, during the process of reconstruction. But on the whole the town seems to me to have got fair value for its expenditure. Street after street of the old Turkish hovels has been replaced by the broad avenues of which I have spoken, and in the course of two or three years all trace of the old town will pretty well have vanished. I may add that a large proportion of the private dwelling-houses have been built by their proprietors at their own cost. By far the larger number of the Sofiote families

live in their own houses, and, in consequence, it is difficult for temporary residents at Sofia to find house-room elsewhere than in the hotels and lodging-houses. Though trade has been bad for the last two or three years in Sofia, as it has been everywhere, the process of building is still going on rapidly, and the remaining Turkish houses are disappearing one by one.

There is one mosque still left in the poorer quarter of the town. Hard by it there rises the graceful minaret from whence on Fridays—which here, as in most countries where the Mahommedans have ruled, are the market days of the town—the Muezzin calls the faithful to prayer. Amidst the rattling of cabs, the shouts of the news-boys, and the continuous chatter of the market folk, you can still catch the plaintive cry of "Allah El Allah," so familiar to all who have lived in Mussulman lands. But these last reminiscences of the bygone time, Muezzin and minaret and mosque, will soon be swept away by the new order of things, of which Sofia is at once the product and the symbol. The Moslem population left in the Capital numbers but a few hundred, and for the most part consists of the cab-drivers, a trade which, for some reason, has always been more in the hands of Mahommedans than of Christians. The small retail trade is chiefly carried on by Bulgarians ; the larger shop-keepers are mainly Austrians or Jews. Of the latter there is a considerable settlement of old standing in the city. The Sofiote Jews are of Spanish origin and of the Sephardin caste, and, in as far as look goes, have little in common with the Russian or Bohemian Hebrew.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE COURT.

IT so chanced that I arrived at Sofia a few days after the birth of the heir-apparent to the Bulgarian crown. The Princess had so far got over her confinement most satisfactorily, and it was expected that her recovery would be the occasion for a number of Court festivities in honour of the recent joyful event. It was only after the infant Prince had been baptized with all due pomp and ceremony that any anxiety was felt as to his mother's health. Suddenly, when everything seemed to be going on well, violent fever set in; and from that date till she left Sofia nearly two months later, the Princess was never able to quit her room or even her bed. The official bulletins, which were published daily, and often more than once a day, conveyed the stereotyped information that the Princess was going on satisfactorily, and that there was no cause for anxiety. The nature of her malady, however, was one of which no reasonable explanation could be offered, or, at any rate, was offered. During the day-time the Princess was perfectly well, but towards nightfall fever set in and lasted for hours, the temperature often going up considerably over 100° Fahr. The received theory was that the Princess was suffering from an attack of intermittent malaria fever, and it was authoritatively

declared that the fever had no connection whatever with her recent confinement. I have reason to believe that the real explanation was infinitely simpler. One of the many reasons why people, as I think, should always feel grateful that they were not born in royal families, is that they are at liberty to choose their own doctors if they are ill, and to be cured or not, as the case may be, according to their own ideas. This privilege is denied to royalty. A Princess of Parma and Saxe-Coburg, not to mention Bulgaria, cannot be confined, like any other woman, by the aid of a competent practitioner or an experienced midwife. It was, or was supposed to be, in accordance with the eternal fitness of things that the Princess should be attended during her confinement by the four most eminent accoucheurs of the Austrian capital. They were, no doubt, men of the highest medical attainments; but as no one person was responsible for the sole conduct of the case, certain elementary duties, which would have been performed by any parish doctor in the case of a woman confined in a workhouse, were overlooked, while the Princess's medical advisers were consulting as to the report they were to make and the treatment they were to recommend. The result was that some kind of internal inflammation set in, and though the fever was checked time after time by the use of febrifuge remedies, it invariably made its reappearance as soon as these remedies ceased to be employed. Again and again it was officially announced that the fever had disappeared, and again and again the supposed recovery was followed by a relapse. The doctors were continually travelling backward and forward between Vienna and Sofia, and it was only after the attacks of fever had continued for weeks that they

made, or at any rate announced, the discovery that it was due to some local inflammation, and not to general causes. When this conclusion had been arrived at, there was great apprehension that an operation would be necessary. A consultation, however, was held at the palace, to which the most celebrated operators in Vienna had been summoned; and it was finally decided that no drastic measures were required, that the inflammation, whatever its cause might be, had best be left to work itself out, and that the only thing to be done was to remove the Princess at once to a milder climate than that of the bleak, elevated, mountain-surrounded plateau of Sofia.

As a matter of course, the Princess's illness stopped all Court festivities and all public rejoicing. Prince Ferdinand was deeply anxious, and was so depressed by the state of his wife's health that he never quitted the palace, except in obedience to the urgent remonstrances of the doctors. He would hardly see any one except his Ministers, and even in their case he had as few interviews with them as possible. His one care was to keep the house quiet, so as to avoid the risk of the Princess being disturbed during the intervals, in the daytime, when she dropped off into sleep. The palace, as I have said, stands in the very centre of the town, surrounded by streets on every side. Strict orders were given that no carriage was to pass the royal residence at more than a foot's pace. The displays of fireworks which were to have taken place as usual on Prince Ferdinand's birthday, and on the anniversary of the liberation of Bulgaria from Turkish rule, were countermanded by royal order, and instructions were given by the police to request the crowd to avoid all cheering and shouting and all kinds of noisy manifestations

within earshot of the palace. The request, I may add, was obeyed most carefully and cheerfully.

The palace is a long barrack-like building, with no wings, and with little ground, either in front or at the back, on which new buildings could be erected. On the front it is separated from the Alexander Square by a broad, raised road. At the back, a narrow strip of walled-in garden ground divides it from the houses of the adjacent streets. The accommodation within the palace is very limited, and at the period of which I speak its residential capabilities were strained to the utmost by the presence of the Prince's mother, the Princess Clementine, and of the Princess's father and stepmother, the Duke and Duchess of Parma, and their respective suites. The royal guests had come to Sofia in order to be on the spot during the Princess's confinement, and had intended to leave directly afterwards; but their departure was delayed by her protracted illness.

Under these circumstances, all Court life was necessarily at a standstill during the greater part of my residence at Sofia, and I saw less of the Court than I probably should have done otherwise, as all visitors, and especially all English visitors who take the trouble to be presented, are made very welcome at the palace. The Prince was much in England as a child, at the time when his mother's family resided there in exile. He can read English easily, and speaks it fairly, though French and German are the languages he prefers to employ in conversation. The Princess speaks English excellently, and without accent, and is very English in her ideas and tastes. After her mother's death, which occurred when she was still a very young child, she was brought up under the sole care

of an English lady, Miss Fraser, to whom she is deeply attached, and who, since her marriage, has continued to reside with her. The nurses of the baby Prince are Englishwomen, recommended to the Princess by the Queen of England, who, through the Coburg connection, is, in as far as I can make out the genealogy, a grand-aunt by marriage and a great-grand-aunt by birth of the heir to the Bulgarian throne.

The first time I visited the palace was on the eve of the Princess's departure for Ebenthal, her mother-in-law's residence near Vienna, to which she had been sent by her doctors for change of air, as soon as it was thought that she could be removed without danger. On the morning of the day, I received a letter from the Grand-Marshal of the Court, informing me that his Royal Highness would be pleased to receive me in the afternoon. The invitation was coupled with the gratifying notice that I might be permitted to present myself in ordinary morning attire. The Prince, knowing the dislike of Englishmen to putting on evening dress in broad daylight, had kindly relaxed in my favour the ordinary rule, that all visitors, who are desirous of an audience, must follow the French fashion and appear attired as if they were going out to dinner.

The road to the palace is open to the public, and the sentries, stationed at the gates, allow any one to pass up to the central door which opens on the chief staircase. A number of soldiers in Lancers' uniform, grey jackets, covered with red braid, and Astrakhan caps, were stationed on the steps. Aide-de-camps in full uniform, officials in evening dress, covered with stars and orders, made up a very fair imitation of a Court. The ante-chamber was crowded, as the Ministers and other persons connected

with the Government, all in evening dress, had come to pay their respects to the Princess Clementine, who was expected to take her departure on the following day. The passages were filled with boxes, and there was an unmistakable look of an impending flitting about the whole scene. I was first taken to the room of the Princess Clementine, who had been kind enough to express a wish to see me, having known near relatives of mine in the old days of Twickenham. The Princess's hair is snow-white, but her features are very beautiful, and her complexion is marvellously smooth and clear. She is the handsomest of the Orleans family I have known, and certainly possesses, to a greater degree, perhaps, than any of them, the singular charm of manner possessed by royal personages when they are desirous of being pleasant. In spite of her extreme deafness she has a very sweet and well-modulated voice. But to shout through an ear-trumpet in a foreign tongue is not conducive to conversation. Her Highness asked much after people we had both known during her visits to Twickenham; she seemed anxious to learn my impressions of Bulgaria, spoke highly of the Bulgarian national character, and was obviously wrapped up heart and soul in the fortunes of her youngest and favourite son.

After leaving the Princess Clementine, I was conducted upstairs to the Prince's room. In the ante-chamber at the top of the stairs, there are hung the flags of the various native militia regiments which took part in the War of Independence. On the chimney-piece there stand three huge wax-tapers, which King Milan took with him on starting from Belgrade on his campaign against Bulgaria, which were to have been presented to the Cathedral of Sofia on the occasion of the High Mass

his Majesty had intended to have celebrated there on his entry into Sofia at the head of his victorious troops, and which were captured by the Bulgarian army after the rout of the Servians at Tirot. All the regular ceremonial of a presentation at Court was duly observed. About the passages there were servants in gorgeous liveries; you were passed from one chamberlain to another, all in Court suits; sentries of the Royal Guard were stationed at each doorway, and you had to be presented to a series of officials before you reached the room where the Prince was waiting to receive his visitors.

Owing to the circumstances to which I have alluded, there was almost a complete absence of any Court pageants during my stay at Sofia. The only one of any importance which I witnessed, was one that took place on the occasion of the departure of the Princess Clementine and of the Prince and Princess of Parma. Even this was of what I suppose would be called the semi-State order. No notice was given publicly of the event, and the only sign I noticed of anything unusual going on was, that the band played before the palace at an unusually early hour, and that there were a large number of people driving about the streets in tall hats, in lieu of the caftans and billycocks which are the universal head-gear of Sofia all the year round. Hats are only worn here on Court occasions, and to see more than one hat about the streets is almost proof positive that some Court function or other is taking place.

Though pageants of any kind are rare occurrences in Sofia, and though the departure of the royal visitors was about as much of a pageant as is often witnessed here, it seemed to attract little public attention, and there was no

crowd, as there would have been in most capitals, either in front of the palace or along the road traversed to the railway station. The Orient express, by which the royalties travelled to Vienna, was timed to start at 10.30; before that hour the Ministers, Court officials, and leading notabilities of the town were collected on the platform. Anybody, as a rule, can go in and out of the Bulgarian stations, which are not kept closed after the usual continental fashion; but on the present occasion nobody, not known to the officials, was allowed to enter the station. It was a raw, bleak morning, though the sun was shining brightly, and all the Ministers and officers in command of the escort had crowded into the station restaurant. The whole company, including two high ecclesiastical dignitaries of the Bulgarian Church, with long, black, flowing robes, and high cardboard hats, looking like a section of a stove pipe with a flat rim round the top, were smoking cigarettes and drinking brandy while awaiting the Prince's arrival. The Ministers were in evening dress, wrapped up in furs and Inverness capes, and had the aspect of men who had not been to bed all night, and who had not had time to change their clothes before they left home. Very few men look well in broad daylight when clad in seamy, rumpled dress-suits and soiled white ties, and the Bulgarian Ministers are certainly no exception to the common rule. They are not built in the dress-clothes way, and whenever I saw them in other than their work-a-day costumes, they always reminded me of the supers who appear as the courtiers in *Hamlet*, when played at the provincial theatre. Moreover, the spectacle of a whole Cabinet Council sitting round the beer-stained table of a railway refreshment room, and standing drinks to each

other of beer and brandy, is not, somehow, in accordance with Western ideas of official dignity. If occasion calls, these peasant politicians can act the part of statesmen with no lack of manner; but when they are not so to speak on duty, the old peasant nature comes at once to the surface. It is the same to a great extent with the soldiers. A stronger, sturdier body of men, privates as well as officers, I have never seen; but though they are not slovenly, one cannot honestly say that they are smart. Their uniforms fit badly, and are not worn easily, and in their gait they slouch rather than march. One never can resist the impression that they are men fresh from the plough and unaccustomed to any other dress than the sheepskin coats and woollen leggings of the Bulgarian peasant. There can, however, be no doubt as to their fighting qualities, still less as to their physical powers of endurance.

On the arrival of the royal party, accompanied by an escort of some hundred cavalry of the *corps d'élite*, they were shown into a private waiting-room, in front of which red carpets had been laid down, leading up to the Prince's saloon carriage, which was to be fixed on to the Orient express. The Ministers, Court officials, and the chief residents were then summoned in turn to the waiting-room to take leave of the Princess Clementine and the Duchess of Parma. After a few minutes, Prince Ferdinand and his father-in-law, both in full uniform as generals of the Bulgarian army, came out on the platform and walked up and down the line of troops drawn up opposite to the train. Swords were drawn, colours lowered and salutes exchanged, and the band struck up the Bulgarian National Air, which, in common with all military music here, was played with great vigour and precision, though, as far as I

could judge, without much musical sentiment. Then the Prince led his mother up to the saloon carriage ; the Duke and Duchess of Parma followed, and amidst the hoarse, deep shouts—rather than cheers—of the soldiers, which resembled guttural barks, the train slowly steamed out of the station, and the function was at an end. In obedience to their instructions, on this, as on every State occasion, none of the diplomatic body were present, except our own Minister, the representative of the Sultan, and the Greek and Belgian Consuls-General.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SOFIOTE SOCIETY.

If such a thing as "society" exists anywhere in Bulgaria, it is to be found in the Capital. Sofia is the centre not only of the political but of the intellectual life of the country. Yet even here society, as the word is used in the West of Europe, is conspicuous by its absence. You may have your doubts whether there is much high thinking in Sofia, but there is no doubt whatever as to plain living being the order of the day. The Sofiotes rise early; by seven a.m. the shops are open, they are mostly closed for an hour or so at noon, and then remain open till eight or nine. By ten, at any rate in winter time, the streets are well-nigh deserted, and I should fancy the great majority of the people are in bed. The chief meal of the day, alike at the restaurants and private houses, takes place at one; the food is plentiful enough in quantity and not bad in quality; the cuisine is a poor imitation of second-rate Teutonic cookery. Beer and the thin wine of the country are the only drinks you see at meals, and even of these the consumption is very small. About seven there is a supper, which is only a somewhat more meagre and less ornate edition of the dinner. At the club the charge for the midday dinner is four francs a head, including wine; for the evening supper or *déjeuner*, as it is quaintly

called in the club bills, the charge is only three francs. There is a deduction of about 25 per cent. on these charges in the case of members who subscribe to the meals for a month, and in this way the average scale of the club charges is reduced to that which prevails in the best town restaurants. At the hotels no meals are supplied as a rule. There is only one good hotel in the whole town, the *Grand Hôtel de Bulgarie;* all the others are dirty and uncomfortable, and are below the level of second-class hotels in any decent European town.

There are about half a dozen cafés in the town, which are frequented by the quality of Sofia. Towards five o'clock these cafés are at their fullest, and by seven they are pretty well deserted. A lady is seldom seen in any of them. If one appears there by chance, you may be pretty sure she is a foreigner. The male customers drink beer or mastic, a native beverage resembling in taste a mixture of brandy and absinthe ; the spirit, however, is unadulterated and is not, I should say, very potent. The native beer is flat and sour, but the German beer, which is called here *proksh,* and which is manufactured in the country by German brewers, is fairly good lager. The *habitués* of the cafés pass their time smoking, reading papers, and playing cards ; but general conversation is very rare. Indeed, a stranger in these cafés cannot avoid being impressed by the extreme quiet and taciturnity of the customers. There is no loud talking, no disputing, no screaming at the top of the voice. Nobody seems much to notice who comes in or who goes out. Everybody is intent on his own occupation, whether it is reading, smoking, or card-playing. In these respects the cafés of Bulgaria and of the Levant are utterly unlike ; their only

point of resemblance is that they are both shabby, dirty, and malodorous.

There is a good deal of card-playing at the cafés, and I believe that during the Russian era high play used to go on constantly in the chief hotels. But in as far as I could observe, the stakes played for at the cafés in the present day are not high; and no great excitement is visible amidst the card-players. The games most commonly played are bresch, cayenne, misère, and others of the many Continental variations of dummy whist. Billiards are played here, as in France, by the cannon game; but the element of luck supplied by pockets is provided for by a number of small ninepins being placed in the centre of the table. If, in addition to making a cannon, you hit down one or more of these ninepins, you score so many points in your favour in proportion to the number of ninepins knocked down.

I am told that though the stakes played for may be low, according to English ideas, they are not low in comparison with the means of the players. While I was staying at Sofia a great sensation was produced by the suicide of an eminent medical man, who killed himself one fine morning after having lost, on the evening before not only all the money he possessed, but 40,000 francs which he had no means of paying. The unfortunate gambler had been a member of the Sofia club, and had in former years been one of a clique of people who habitually played there for high stakes. The play which led the doctor to commit suicide did not take place in the club-house, but in a private dwelling. Yet, with their usual disregard of fairness, the Opposition papers made a violent attack, in connection with this lamentable event, upon

some of the Ministers who were in the habit of coming to the club and playing there till late at games in which considerable sums were lost or won. A strong article appeared in the *Bulgarie*, a paper published in French, and supposed to be subsidized by the palace, denouncing high play as an evil which ought to be suppressed; and certainly for some time after the appearance of this article the play at the club was much less frequent and costly than it had been previously to this sad occurrence. Still my impression is that high play is confined to a very small class. Under the new *régime* a certain small number of Sofiotes have amassed fortunes which, though not large according to our Western notions, are still large according to a Bulgarian standard. The acquisition of wealth has not led to any alteration in the mode of their daily lives, and about the only way in which these *nouveaux riches* of Bulgaria can employ their wealth is by playing for higher stakes than they used to do in their earlier days. Moreover, it is only fair to add that, with the exception of card-playing, there is hardly any form of social entertainment to be found in Sofia. The Court and the members of the diplomatic body are the only persons who ever entertain. I never heard, during the whole time of my residence there, of a single dinner being given by any native inhabitant of the town; and I am assured by people who have resided here for years, and who would be amongst the first people to be invited to any social gathering, that this year is no exception in the above respect. The fact that evening parties are an unknown thing in Sofia is proved by the circumstance that, though there are plenty of open cabs, there are only two closed carriages in the whole of Sofia; and yet

during the season, if it can so be called, of Sofia, the nights are so cold that it would be impossible for ladies in evening-dress to go out in an open carriage. I presume that there must be such things as family gatherings in Bulgaria as in other countries ; but I am informed that even these sort of entertainments are extremely rare, and are absolutely confined to very near relations. This year a contract was signed for the construction of a new Home Office at Sofia, and M. Stambouloff made it a condition of the contract that the building should contain handsome reception-rooms. The architect informed me that he understood it was the Premier's intention to try and stimulate social life in Sofia by giving a series of Ministerial receptions during the season. If so, a complete innovation will be introduced into the social life of the capital. I should doubt, however, the example thus set officially being much followed in private life. The very few Bulgarian ladies who visit at foreign houses state openly that, even if their husbands wished it, the condition of their houses, and still more of their servants, would render it absolutely impossible for them to receive their friends at home or give any kind of party.

The great difficulty of social life in Sofia is, though in a more aggravated form than elsewhere, the everlasting servants' question. In the old days a Bulgarian household had no domestic servants except the men and women who were employed on the farm; and there is no class, as yet, which has learned to look on domestic service as a regular occupation. The few native servants to be found in Sofia are utterly unused to the duties required of them in more civilized countries. Men servants are almost unknown, and even in well-to-do houses the wife and daughters have

to do most of the house-work. Such native women servants as there are sleep on mattresses on the kitchen floor, and are mere maids-of-all-work. The modes of home life are very primitive, and it is said—with what truth I know not—that corporal punishment is still the custom if a servant incurs her mistress's displeasure. The better class of peasants do not like their children to go into service, and the result is that the Bulgarian servants, with rare exceptions, are said to be of a very low class, and unsatisfactory in all respects.

There are only, as far as I could gather, some dozen or so of native Sofiote ladies who ever visit at the houses of the *Corps Diplomatique,* and almost all these are the wives of Ministers or ex-Ministers. I presume that in Bulgaria, as elsewhere, women exercise a powerful influence in social life; but the influence, supposing it to exist, is almost occult. According to Bulgarian conception, a woman's mission is to stay at home, to keep the house, to bring up the children, and attend to the cooking. Of course, all this will alter to some extent as education, wealth, and progress make their way; but it will, I think, be a long time before Mahommedan ideas with respect to the female sex cease to exercise a paramount influence amidst a race so conservative in its instincts as the people of Bulgaria.

Practically, the only society in Sofia consists of the diplomatic body. But diplomatic society is very much the same all the world over, from Paris to Pekin. The other day diplomats were not unhappily described in a French paper as *les nomades de la haute.* Wherever they go they live amongst themselves; they are here to-day and gone to-morrow; and, like the gipsies, they have no

permanent status in the social life of the place where, for the moment, their tents are pitched. During the winter some two or three charity balls are given in aid of the various societies established for the relief of poor foreigners in Sofia. These balls are given under the direct patronage of the Minister of the country to whom the foreigners in question may happen to belong. Neither the Prince nor the members of his Court can attend these balls when they are given under the patronage of any foreign Minister who does not go to Court. On the other hand, if the ball is held under the patronage of the representative of some one of the friendly Powers, such as Austria, the Prince always signifies his intention of being present; but whenever he does so the representatives of the unfriendly Powers invariably absent themselves. Under this state of things the diplomatic body at Sofia find social relations a matter of difficulty, and I think they are glad of an excuse for not spending more money upon entertaining than they can help. Still, as I have said, there are a certain number of parties given every year at the different legations. At these parties the Ministers and the leading public men of Sofia put in an appearance; but, as a rule, they are not accompanied by their wives, and I believe that, with the exception of some few of these ladies who have been educated abroad, no great desire is manifested by the Sofiote to establish any personal intimacy between themselves and the foreign residents. Even if such a desire is entertained by the ladies of Sofia, it is certainly not encouraged by their husbands. One may fairly say, therefore, that what the Germans call *Damen Gesellchaft* is an unknown thing in Sofia, and, this being so, the men can hardly be blamed if they seek such

entertainment as they can find at the clubs or restaurants. Under any circumstances Sofia would be an ungrateful soil in which to cultivate social relations, to start a *salon*, or to try and set a fashion. The *genius loci* is eminently unfavourable. Apart from the cafés, the only place where Sofiote society congregates is at the Union Club, the one club of the city. It is a pleasant, cheery resort, established by the efforts of our popular British representative, Mr. Dering, and, as foreign clubs go, is by no means a bad imitation of its British original. It contains a reading-room, where there is a very fair supply of German, French, and English papers, but, in as far as I could perceive, no Russian publications; a billiard-room, which is very little frequented; and a dining-room, where breakfast and dinner are provided daily for all members who like to subscribe for their repasts, and which is almost exclusively frequented by the younger members of the Consular body who, not being married, have no homes of their own. Neither the news-room, nor the library, nor the dining-saloon are much resorted to by the native members. If you want to find them you must look for them in the card-room, which forms the real *raison d'être* of the club. Every afternoon this room is filled with the leading political and social notabilities of the capital. Baccarat and bézique are the games most in favour, and I have at times seen a good deal of money change hands. The play goes on till about half-past eight, when, as a rule, the party breaks up. But about once or, at most, twice a week, there are late nights. The players on these occasions have some sort of supper served up for their own party at nine, and play begins again at ten, and goes on sometimes till the small hours of the morning. To our

Western ideas it seems strange to see a whole Cabinet of Ministers seated round a baccarat-table, laughing, smoking, drinking, whistling, and sometimes singing, while the Premier or the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs holds the bank. Every country, however, has its own usages, and I think it would be unjust to attribute the frequent presence of the leading politicians of Bulgaria in the card-rooms of the Union Club to any special love of gambling. What their presence does show is the total absence of general society in the place. If any Sofiote wishes for relaxation after his day's work—and most of the leading men here work very hard and very long—the club is the one place he can go to for entertainment. There is but little general conversation in the club, and the only entertainment to be found there is in card-playing. I have thought it worth while to dwell somewhat on this feature of social life in Sofia, mainly in order to show how very meagre and jejune that life still is.

There is a handsome theatre where performances are given occasionally in Bulgarian, but it is very little frequented. There are also one or two *cafés chantants*, chiefly resorted to by the German commercial travellers, waiters, and shopmen of Sofia. At these places a few elderly, painted, wrinkled waifs and strays from the music halls of the Fatherland sing songs with cracked voices to the accompaniment of a piano out of tune. After each song the singer comes round with a plate and solicits contributions from the customers. The average contribution is a penny, and these pennies, together with the commission paid upon the liquors which they induce the customers to order, constitute the only remuneration given to the performers. These wretched places of amusement,

so called on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, are very little visited by the natives, though I am told that occasionally, on the nights of the great popular holidays, the townspeople come there, and that even Ministers have been seen amongst the audience. Indeed, the utter absence of ladies' society in Vienna is about the only reason why I can imagine the wildest and youngest of Sofiote gallants ever frequenting these resorts.

On fine afternoons—and most afternoons are fine in the clear, bright air of this elevated plateau—the *beau monde* of Sofia takes its pleasure soberly on the one promenade of the capital, the Constantinople Road. Just at the entrance of the town there is a public garden called the *Pepinerie*, with an artificial lake, on which there is skating during the winter, while in summer a band plays in the grounds, and any amount of beer is drunk at the kiosks. Beyond this garden there stretches the long, broad, bare, straight highway, leading southwards, which skirts the foot of the mountains. The view of the hills on both sides is very beautiful, but the road itself is dull and dusty. On gala days there are a score or so of hack-carriages in this Rotten Row of Sofia; but the bulk of the public go on foot, walking stolidly to the stone which marks the second kilometre on the highway, and then walking back again. The Prince may frequently be met walking here himself. A few of the officers of the garrison may also be seen riding; but, though they are well mounted, they have, as a rule, bad seats, and in their dull grey uniforms they detract but little from the monotony of the scene. There is another public garden in the Alexander Square, where a military band plays every summer afternoon, and where there is an open-air café. There is also

a wooden booth in the suburbs, where German plays are occasionally performed in the summer by travelling companies. These are all the regular entertainments of the Capital. Somehow, the Bulgarians seem to me to take their pleasure, as Froissart said of the English, *moult tristement.*

There are undoubtedly a good number of educated people in Sofia, but an educated class with literary tastes can hardly yet be said to exist in the capital, and still less in the provincial towns. There are only two or three book-shops in the whole of Sofia, and even these seem to me to lay themselves out mainly for the custom of foreign residents. The few books published in Bulgarian are almost entirely school manuals or text-books. The only native literature of any importance consists of newspapers. There is, as I have said, absolute liberty of the Press in theory; in practice this liberty is controlled by the high-handed action of the Government, which, with or without cause, exercises the right of sending the editor to prison for seditious or libellous language. Ultimately, of course, the editors are placed upon their trial, but under the usages of the country the Government possesses the power of postponing the trial of a prisoner for a considerable period. The remedy provided in this indirect fashion against Press abuses is not, however, as efficacious as might be imagined, as in order to evade the danger of summary arrest the responsible editor is seldom the real editor, but is some man who has nothing to do with the paper, and who is simply hired for the purpose of being sent to prison, if necessary, in the place of his principal. Recently, at Philippopolis, there were four responsible editors of an opposition paper there, in prison

at one and the same time for the publication of articles which probably they had never seen and could not have read if they had seen them. At the same time, no reader of the Bulgarian Press can doubt the necessity for some form of censorship. Their columns are filled with the most violent and rancorous abuse of their political opponents. The terms in which the editors of the rival papers abuse each other are such as could not be mentioned in respectable society, and the general character of the articles is of the coarsest and crudest kind. In as far as I can learn, the circulation of almost all the Bulgarian papers is extremely limited, and extends very little beyond the towns in which they are published. In the country districts newspapers are hardly to be found at all. This state of things will no doubt right itself in time, but for the moment the native Press enjoys an amount of license far in excess of that warranted by the general culture of native newspaper readers.

I have no doubt that in Sofia, as in every other town, there is a certain amount of local scandal. Human nature is the same everywhere, and I have no reason to suppose that the domestic morality of Bulgaria is exceptionally high. Still a stranger cannot help being struck with how little you hear in the clubs or elsewhere of domestic gossip, and still less of scandal. The explanation of this I take to be that, owing to the absence of general society and a sort of semi-Oriental sentiment with regard to the privacy of the home, the public knows comparatively little of what goes on inside their neighbours' houses. I witnessed one incident which seemed to me to throw considerable light on the relations of married life amidst the peasant class. One day, when I was passing Zaribrod, the station on

the Servian frontier, I noticed a crowd collected on the platform, listening to a man gesticulating and shouting with extreme violence, a thing which you rarely witness in Bulgaria. On inquiry I found that the man was a Bulgarian peasant, who had carried on a small retail business in Sofia. He was leaving the country with his family because he found that an intrigue existed between his wife and a young man in the town, and this intrigue, as he declared, hindered his wife from attending to her home duties and caused her to neglect the business. At the frontier station he had discovered the lover hidden in a third-class compartment, while he and his family were travelling second-class. Thereupon, the husband stormed up and down the platform, appealed to the stationmaster, the commissary of police, and the bystanders, calling upon them to arrest the further progress of the gay Lothario, whose attentions to his wife had broken up his home and were driving his family into exile. The wife was a middle-aged, dowdy, slovenly woman—a Hungarian, as I was informed, by birth. She was surrounded by a number of dirty children running all about the platform. The woman giggled and cried by turns; the lover looked sheepish, kissed his hand to his *inamorata*, and strolled up and down, half proud and half ashamed, while the husband shrieked and yelled and bawled. But of violence, or of any threat to use violence, I could not discover the slightest trace on the part of either the husband or the lover. Sentiment is not the fault of the Bulgarian peasantry, and the whole character of the wrangle was much more like that of two peasants disputing about the ownership of a pig than that of a husband quarrelling with his wife's lover about which of them should accompany the lady. If Menelaus, Paris,

and Helen had been Bulgarians, there would, I am convinced, never have been a siege of Troy. Public opinion on the platform was obviously unfavourable to the lover, on the ground that he had no right to pursue the wife if the husband objected to his doing so. Finally, he consented to remain behind, and the last I saw of him, as the train moved off, was that he was blowing kisses to the lady, who was leaning out of the carriage window with her husband by her side.

Curiously enough, the downfall of the Stambouloff Ministry, which had held office for a period of unwonted duration, and which was regarded as overwhelmingly powerful, was due in part to the one social scandal which enlivened my residence at Sofia. The whole story illustrates another phase of Sofiote social life, and therefore what little there is to say of it may as well be recorded here. During the Prince's absence in Austria, owing to his wife's illness, M. Savoff, the Minister of War, suddenly wrote to the Prime Minister, stating that he could not consent to sit any longer in the same Cabinet with M. Slavkoff, the Minister of Justice, whom he accused of being his wife's lover, and declaring that either he or M. Slavkoff must quit the Ministry. The Premier demurred to this on the ground that he was anxious to retain the services of both Ministers, and that he failed to see that M. Savoff had any evidence as to the justice of his accusation. Thereupon, M. Savoff retorted by declaring that most of his colleagues, and M. Stambouloff especially, had also had intrigues with his wife. On the Premier's request, M. Savoff consented to suspend his resignation, pending the Prince's return to Sofia. The common report at the time was, that M. Stambouloff's political opponents took advantage of this

incident in order to weaken his position at Court. Whatever the cause may be, M. Savoff was induced to drop the charge against M. Slavkoff, and to transfer it to M. Stambouloff. M. Stambouloff's friends and partisans declared that M. Savoff was completely off his head on the subject of his wife's alleged infidelities. On any hypothesis his conduct is almost unaccountable. He first took advice as to the possibility of divorcing his wife, and was informed that he had no evidence on which a divorce could be granted. He then challenged M. Stambouloff to fight a duel. The Premier, whose personal courage is beyond a doubt, referred the matter to two eminent military men, who, after examining the case, declared that M. Savoff could show no reasonable ground for demanding a duel, as he had absolutely no proof of the charge which he had brought against the Premier. M. Stambouloff himself spoke with the utmost frankness on the subject. He told anybody that, to the best of his belief, he had never seen Madame Savoff but twice in his life; that he had never spoken more than half a dozen words with her; and, what was more, that even if he had been disposed to carry on a clandestine intrigue with any married woman, he was absolutely debarred from anything of the kind by the fact that, since the assassination of M. Beltcheff, he never left the house or went anywhere without an armed escort. This statement is undoubtedly true, for when he goes shooting, as he is extremely fond of doing, he is always followed, even while tramping through marshes on the look-out for snipe, by the soldiers in attendance.

On the Prince's return M. Savoff laid the case before his Highness. Amongst other statements he specified the dates of two particular nights which he declared M.

Stambouloff had spent in Sofia in his wife's company. On being shown this statement, M. Stambouloff showed by his diary that on one of the dates specified he had been staying with the Prince at his seaside residence near Varna, and that on the other he had been addressing a public meeting a hundred miles away from the capital. The Prince, while admitting the force of the evidence, showed a certain amount of reluctance to dismissing M. Savoff, on the plea that he was very popular with the army, and that his enforced resignation might give offence in military circles. Thereupon M. Stambouloff handed in his written resignation to the Prince, and requested him to act upon it if he thought proper. The Prince, on discovering that M. Stambouloff, on his part, refused, after what had happened, to retain M. Savoff as a colleague, consented not only to the acceptance of the Minister of War's resignation, but to his immediate dismissal from the ranks of the army. Thereupon M. Savoff left Sofia for Philippopolis, accompanied by his wife, with whom he was reported to be still on the best of terms. There, for the time, the matter ended ; but the dispute between the Prince and M. Stambouloff on the subject of the Sofia scandal, which a local paper described at the time as far exceeding in enormity the Dilke scandal in London, contributed to the causes which have led the Prince to dispense, for the time being at any rate, with the services of his great Minister.

POLICY OF THE PEASANT STATE.

CHAPTER XXIV.

NATIONAL POLICY.

It is very difficult to understand the national policy of any country except your own. Nor is it always easy to understand that. It is, therefore, with some hesitation I venture to explain what, in my view, is the national policy of Bulgaria, in as far as she has at present any definite policy, other than that of waiting the course of events. Putting together the many different opinions I have heard from natives and foreign residents in the country, and after making due allowance for the bias of my informants, I have arrived at one or two conclusions which, if not quite the truth, are, I fancy, very near the truth. I am convinced that for the time being the national ambition of the country is confined within very reasonable limits. There may be Bulgarian enthusiasts who, inspired by the traditions of the doubtful glories of a somewhat hypothetical past, look forward to the day when a Bulgarian empire might be re-established with Constantinople as its capital. But I do not believe that any such aspirations are entertained by the great mass of the people. Amongst the Bulgarians there is no dominant sentiment analogous to the *grande idée* of the Greeks.

Every Bulgarian entertains the belief that within the lifetime of the generation now growing into manhood the Ottoman Empire in Europe will have become a thing of the past. There is a very general desire that the ultimate solution of the Eastern Question should prove such as to secure the independence of Bulgaria, but there is no desire that Bulgaria should succeed to the inheritance of the Ottoman Empire. I quite admit that such an aspiration would be even more unreasonable in the case of the Bulgarians than it is in that of the Greeks. The Hellenic nation has a great past, a grand literature, and has also large colonies of fellow-Greeks settled over the whole face of the Levant. Bulgaria can put forward no pretensions of any equal value. Her people have not—and, I think know that they have not—the qualities of a ruling race. No more for that matter have the Greeks, but they fancy that they have, which makes all the difference. The Bulgars are brave soldiers, but they are not—which is by no means the same thing—a military nation. A peasant State of small proprietors can never, as a community, be actuated by a blind desire of conquest. By character, by custom, and by tradition, the interests of Bulgaria are confined pretty well within her own borders; and the prospect of ruling over foreign countries and alien races, even if such a prospect were realizable, would have little attraction for the sober, matter-of-fact Bulgarian character.

Thus it is a mistake to imagine that the Bulgarians, as a nation, have any particular desire to bring about the fall of the Ottoman Empire. In common with all the Rayah races, which have been subject to Turkish domination, they have an hereditary antipathy, partly racial,

partly theological, to the rule of Islam. Whenever the Cross replaces the Crescent over the mosque of St. Sophia, the sympathies of the Bulgars will be with the victors, not with the vanquished. But, as I have already remarked, fanaticism of creed is far less marked amidst the Bulgarians than amidst other Sclavonic races. They are in no particular hurry to see their own faith rendered triumphant by the fall of Islam, and they are perfectly content that the Turks should remain at Constantinople so long as their presence there affords any protection to Bulgaria against Russian aggression. Whatever may be the real truth about the Bulgarian atrocities, it is obvious that they have left behind no such bitter resentment in the minds of a people, slow to forgive or forget injuries, as to render the idea of co-operation with Turkey distasteful to the national sentiment.

In my opinion the aspirations of Bulgarian statesmanship look rather towards the Ægean than towards the Bosphorus, that is, towards the formation of a Sclav State, composed of Servia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bulgaria, rather than towards any reconstitution of the Byzantine Empire. But even this aspiration is not, I gather, very widely or very seriously entertained. No doubt, the Bulgarians, if they had to merge their individual existence in any larger community, would prefer incorporation with a great Sclav State to any other modification of their existing status. Pan-Sclavism, however, never made much progress south of the Balkans, and the influence of the Pan-Sclav agitation has declined in a very marked way since the emancipation of Bulgaria from Turkish rule. What the Bulgarians most desire at heart is to preserve their independence, and to be governed by their own people,

according to their own ideas, customs, and sentiments. Education and material progress may possibly enlarge their aspirations, but for the present an autonomous peasant community, comprising the whole Bulgar-speaking race within its bounds, forms the ideal of the Bulgarian people. It is because this ideal is consistent with the maintenance of Turkey in Europe, and inconsistent with the establishment of Russia upon the Bosphorus, that the settled policy of the Bulgarian Government is to uphold the *status quo* in Eastern Europe. It is for this reason that the policy of the Government, though modified by hereditary dislike of Islam, commends itself on the whole to popular opinion in the Principality.

I do not believe, therefore, that an attempt to effect the general emancipation of the Rayah races under Turkish rule would meet with any enthusiastic support in Bulgaria, except under one particular contingency to which I shall refer presently. A crusade, for instance, for the emancipation of Armenia from Turkish rule would not in any case be actively encouraged by the Bulgarians ; and if this crusade was conducted—as in all likelihood it would be—under the lead, and in the interest of Russia, it would probably be confronted by the active opposition of Bulgaria. For the time being Russia constitutes the chief danger to the independence of Bulgaria ; and the Bulgarians, to speak the plain truth, care much more about the preservation of their own independence, than they do about the immediate emancipation of their co-religionists under the rule of the Crescent, so long as these co-religionists are not men of their own race. It may be said that this is not a very magnanimous or elevated policy. My answer would be that I am discussing, not

what the policy of Bulgaria ought to be upon abstract principles, but what it is as a matter of fact. I may add further, that no other policy could reasonably be expected from her. A community of small landed proprietors is the last one in the world in which altruistic sentiments are ever likely to obtain a footing. The French proverb that the shirt is nearer than the coat expresses tersely the view taken by a peasant community in all public as well as private affairs. In the present instance the shirt is independence; the coat is the substitution, elsewhere than in Bulgaria itself, of the rule of the Cross for that of the Crescent.

In this respect the policy of Bulgaria is almost identical with that of Roumania. Both States are much more concerned about protecting their own independence, which would be imperilled by the advance of Russia, than they are about promoting the emancipation of their fellow-Christians under Turkish domination, who, though they may belong to the same creed as themselves, are yet of different race, language, and nationality. This coincidence of interests has brought about very close and cordial relations between the two States of Bulgaria and Roumania. Though there is no truth in the report of an offensive and defensive alliance having been formed between them, it is probable that, in the event of any fresh attempt on the part of Russia to seize upon Constantinople, her advance along the route followed in 1878 would now be resisted by the united force of the Roumanian and Bulgarian armies.

Under these altered conditions Bulgaria has become a source of strength to Turkey as against Russia, in lieu of a source of weakness. It would be the interest of Bulgaria to assist Turkey in repelling any Russian attack;

and from her geographical position, the character of her people, and the strength of her army, this assistance is not a thing to be despised. It might, therefore, have been expected that Turkey on her side would make it her policy to conciliate in every way the good will of a Principality which, though absolutely independent in fact, still recognizes her nominal suzerainty. This policy is, I believe, the one which commends itself in the main to Turkish statesmanship. The steady prosecution, however, of any policy of this kind is liable to constant interruption owing to a variety of hostile influences. In the first place, continuity of policy, in this as in all other matters, is of very rare occurrence with the Porte, in consequence of the personal and capricious interference of the Sultan in the smallest details of the administration. Secondly, there is a natural disinclination on the part of Turkey to treat as equals a people who, till the other day, had been ruled by her for centuries as a subject and inferior race. And, what is more than all, the influence of Russia at Constantinople is constantly exerted to induce the Porte to run counter to the interests of Bulgaria, even in matters with which Russia has apparently no personal concern. It is not necessary to point out the various ways, direct and still more indirect, by which Russia can bring pressure to bear upon the Sultan and upon his Ministers. To my mind the wonder is, not that the Porte has so often given umbrage to Bulgaria, but that it has hitherto contrived to avoid any open rupture. That no such rupture has ever taken place is due in no small degree to the persistency with which the expediency of keeping on good terms with Bulgaria was impressed upon the Porte by the late Sir William White, whose death was, and still is, regarded in Bulgaria as a national calamity.

The relations between the Christian and Mahommedan citizens of Bulgaria afford frequent occasions of friction. The Tomaks object to being compelled to serve in the ranks of the Bulgarian army. Yet, by the Constitution, universal military service is compulsory throughout the Principality. This cause of quarrel has been to a considerable extent removed by the action of M. Stambouloff, who consented to grant exemption from military service to every Mahommedan conscript in Bulgaria on the payment of a fine of £20. A more serious difficulty, however, has arisen in connection with this question, for which Turkey is indirectly, if not directly, responsible. In virtue of one of the laxities of administration which practically mitigated the abuses of Ottoman rule, Turkish subjects have always been permitted to obtain naturalization from foreign Powers, without any great objection being raised by their own Government. In the old days a large number of Bulgarian citizens got themselves naturalized as the subjects of some foreign Power in order to evade the necessity of serving in the Turkish armies. The Power which granted letters of naturalization most readily and most cheaply was Persia, whose authorities were and are willing to confer the right of Persian nationality upon anybody who chooses to pay a fee of a very few pounds. The conditions of Bulgaria have completely altered since the days when her people were anxious to enrol themselves as naturalized citizens of a foreign State, in order to obtain exemption from military service in the Turkish army. The practice, however, of claiming Persian nationality as a means of escaping the conscription is still much in favour, not only with the Tomaks, but with the Greek Bulgarians. The Government are willing to admit

this plea in the case of Bulgarians who became naturalized Persians in the old Turkish days. But they object most reasonably to the continuance of a system under which any Bulgarian can escape his obligations as the citizen of a free State, by purchasing for a trifle the right to call himself a Persian. The Government of Teheran has little more to do directly with Bulgaria than the Government of Bolivia, and has about as much influence within the Principality. Persian protection, therefore, would be of little value if it had to be exercised by Persia. Owing, however, to an ill-advised arrangement, concluded some little time ago by the Shah with our Foreign Office, the British Government has undertaken the protection of all Persian subjects in countries where the Shah has no representatives of his own. This is the case in Bulgaria ; and, in consequence, all Bulgarians who claim to be naturalized Persians can command the good offices of our representatives throughout the Principality. The discharge of functions, which Russia, France, and Germany had previously undertaken in turn, and had each subsequently relinquished as being too burdensome, not only imposes a vast amount of uncalled-for and gratuitous trouble upon our Minister and Consuls, but also brings them into constant disputes with the national authorities. It is obviously the duty of Bulgarian Ministers to resist all attempts on the part of Bulgarian citizens to evade their national obligations on the pretence of being Persian subjects. It is equally the duty of our representatives to see that, however unreasonable his contention, a Bulgarian subject, who can show a valid title of Persian nationality, is not deprived of his legal privileges. The Bulgarian authorities realize that,

however vexatious the action of our representatives may appear to be, they are not to blame for its occurrence, and that the difficulty under consideration arises out of the unsatisfactory relations between Bulgaria and the Suzerain Power. The difficulty in question could not have arisen if Bulgaria occupied the same position, in name as well as in fact, as that of Servia or Roumania. So long as Turkey continues to recognize, as Persians, subjects of her own who have acquired by purchase the right of Persian nationality, Bulgaria, as being nominally a Turkish province, cannot dispute the validity of these recognitions. If the Porte were well advised, the trouble might be removed at once by a refusal on the part of the Porte to recognize, as Persians, Ottoman subjects who have never been in Persia, who were born and bred on Turkish soil, who have no intention of quitting their homes, and whose sole claim to Persian nationality lies in their having made a small money payment to the Persian authorities. Unfortunately, in this as in other matters which concern Bulgaria, the Porte is not and never has been well advised.

While making every allowance for the extreme difficulties under which Turkey is placed, I cannot but acknowledge that the patience of Bulgaria has repeatedly been tried almost beyond endurance by the vacillating policy of the Porte. The persistent refusal of the Suzerain Power to recognize Prince Ferdinand as sovereign of Bulgaria, *de jure* as well as *de facto*, is a sentimenal rather than a practical grievance ; still, if the Sultan could once make up his mind to formally acknowledge Prince Ferdinand as the legitimate successor of Prince Alexander, all European Powers, who have no special interest in

studying the susceptibilities of Russia, would at once follow suit. Bulgaria would thus forthwith acquire the material as well as titular advantages of European recognition, advantages which she would have enjoyed long ago but for the insuperable reluctance of the Porte to come to a decision which might give umbrage at St. Petersburg. In the same way the assassination of the Bulgarian Envoy, M. Bulkovitch, at Constantinople, and, even more than the assassination, the way in which Russian influence was allowed to facilitate the flight and escape of the assassin, constituted offences for which no adequate reparation has ever been given or even tendered. Still in these matters, the Bulgarians have had the good sense to recognize that Turkey is not the principal offender, and even if an accomplice after the act, was an unwilling accomplice acting under compulsion.

A similar excuse cannot be made for more recent offences of which Bulgaria has had to complain at the hands of Turkey. I alluded in the commencement of this chapter to one particular contingency, under which Bulgaria might be sorely tempted to depart from her settled policy of not only acquiescing in, but actively supporting, the *status quo* of Turkey in Europe. That contingency consists in the event of any oppression being perpetrated by the Porte on Bulgarians who are still directly subject to Turkish rule. The Turkish administration of Macedonia is the only point concerning which there is any immediate possibility of a serious conflict arising between Turkey and Bulgaria. It was in connection with Macedonia that Turkey contrived the other day to get herself involved in what might easily have proved a very grave difficulty with the Principality. There is, and always has been, a

large Bulgarian population in this Turkish province, whose inhabitants are pretty equally divided in number between Mahommedans, Greeks, and Bulgarians. At Sofia you are confidently assured that the Macedonian Bulgarians largely outnumber the Greek, and that by position, history, nationality, and sentiment Macedonia belongs of right to Bulgaria. At Athens you are told with equal confidence that, in virtue of similar claims, Macedonia is a State which, in the fitness of things, ought to form an integral portion of the Greek kingdom. I have not the knowledge to say which pretension is most or least supported by evidence. All I am concerned with is the fact that, rightly or wrongly, the Bulgarians are convinced that Macedonia, or, at any rate, the very large portion of the province occupied by their fellow-countrymen, is their rightful inheritance. For reasons I have already dwelt upon, they have no wish to enforce their claims prematurely, and are quite content to wait till such time as the decease of "the Sick Man of Europe" is brought about by natural causes. They resent, however, most bitterly any action which could possibly impair their ultimate title to the reversion of Macedonia. There is undoubtedly an active agitation in Macedonia in favour of annexation to Bulgaria; and equally undoubtedly this agitation has the sympathy, if not the support, of the Bulgarian people. In Macedonia, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, questions of race and creed are indissolubly connected with each other; and every national movement is associated with religious sympathies and religious prejudices. From the date when Bulgaria practically recovered her independence, the Macedonian Bulgarians have been endeavouring to stimulate national sentiment by the aid of the Bulgarian

schools, which are under the control of the native clergy. This attempt, if I may use the word, to Bulgarize Macedonia had created very great irritation amidst the Greeks, and their influence at Constantinople has of late been hostile to any aggrandizement of Bulgaria. Greek influence, I may add, is very powerful with the Sultan and the Porte, partly on account of their personal relations with the Phanar, and still more from the fact that Russia has always taken the side of the Greeks. At the instance of the Greeks, the Sultan was induced to issue a decree declaring that henceforth all Bulgarian schools in Macedonia must be registered in the name of some specified individual, directly responsible to the Ottoman Government, and could no longer be allowed to be the property of the communes, which in respect of all theological and educational matters are entirely under the control of the clergy. By this decree, too, the schools were placed under the direct supervision of the local Turkish authorities, who, in Macedonia, so long as Russian influence is predominant at Constantinople, are certain to act as partisans of Greece. It is not easy for an outsider to fully understand the merits or demerits of the decree in question. What is certain is, that it was regarded, both in Macedonia and Bulgaria, as a deliberate attempt to deprive the Bulgarian clergy in Macedonia of their rightful authority as the champions of Bulgarian nationality. This belief was strengthened by the fact that the Greek schools in the province were not included in the operation of the decree.

The issue of this firman excited intense popular indignation throughout Bulgaria. Deputations were sent to the Ministry, calling upon them to take decisive action

in order to protect the Bulgarians in Macedonia from Turkish oppression. Public opinion does not manifest itself very loudly or very rapidly in a sparsely populated country, where there are few large towns, and where the villages are far apart from each other. Still persons, who from their position were well qualified to form a judgment, were confident, at the period of which I speak, that in the event, which was then deemed probable, of any anti-Turkish rising in Macedonia, the Government of Sofia would be compelled by popular sentiment to come to the aid of their compatriots. The popular belief was that if the Bulgarian army were to march into Macedonia, as they could easily do, and proclaim the annexation of the province, Turkey would acquiesce in an accomplished fact, as she had done already in the case of Eastern Roumelia. I do not think that this belief was shared by the statesmen of Sofia. At all events, they were keenly alive to the fact that any Bulgarian invasion of Macedonia, even if temporarily successful, would probably furnish Russia with a plea for intervention. In consequence, though sympathizing fully with popular sentiment on this subject, they exerted all their authority to hinder this sentiment from taking the form of overt action. For a time it seemed doubtful whether they could carry out their policy. In the large towns frequent and numerous meetings were held to protest against the maltreatment of the Macedonian Bulgarians, and resolutions were passed, calling on the Government to insist upon the immediate revocation of the obnoxious decree, even at the risk of war. It was reported, with what truth I know not, that these demonstrations were secretly encouraged by M. Stambouloff in order to bring pressure to bear upon

the Porte. At Philippopolis eight thousand persons were said to have been present at a mass meeting. The peasants who attended the demonstration were armed with bludgeons, which, with a grim irony, they called "the Constitution," and which they applied freely to anybody who was supposed to be of a different way of thinking from their own. Similar indignation meetings were held at Shumla, Tirnova, Varna, and Rustschuk. As an indication of the extent to which public sentiment throughout Bulgaria was excited on this question, I may mention that at this time the proprietor of the artificial lake in the *Pepinière* Gardens at Sofia had been giving a series of public skating balls. The ice was not good, as the winter was then approaching its close, and the attendance at these night *fêtes* had of late been scanty. Thereupon the proprietor announced that half the proceeds of the next *fête* would be devoted to the Bulgarian schools in Macedonia. Attached to the handbills advertising the *fête* there was an extract from a Macedonian paper attacking the Sultan for not having allowed the Exarch of Bulgaria at Constantinople to purchase the late German ambassador's palace, an incident to which I have alluded elsewhere. The result of this announcement was that the *fête* was crowded by the townsfolk of Sofia, though the night was a most unfavourable one for an open-air entertainment.

It is certain that the anti-Turkish agitation in Bulgaria, even if it was initiated by M. Stambouloff, soon assumed proportions which alarmed the Ministry. Orders were issued to the local authorities all over the country to stop these public demonstrations, as being calculated to bring about a breach of the public peace. The step was a bold one, as it laid M. Stambouloff and his colleagues

open to the charge of being indifferent to the wrongs of the Macedonian Bulgarians, and of being prepared to abandon their cause, supposing the Sultan continued obdurate. The charge was made use of with extreme violence by the Opposition Press, especially in Philippopolis, and the common expectation was that the agitation against Turkey would soon be converted into a popular outcry for the dismissal of the Ministry. Happily, the Turkish Government became alive to the danger of the situation. The Sultan gave way and revoked the decree in a very frank and prompt manner. He not only yielded on the school question, but he consented to the appointment of Bulgarian bishops in Macedonia, a favour which he had hitherto persistently refused. He also granted a site for the erection of a Bulgarian school at Constantinople, and gave the Exarch permission to build a new official residence at Pera. He further promised that in future the ownership of the Bulgarian schools in Macedonia should be vested in the hands of the Bulgarian bishops or of their nominees.

The conclusion of this settlement was extremely gratifying to national feeling in Bulgaria, and was popularly attributed to the great skill with which M. Stambouloff had worked on the apprehensions of the Porte and had carried his point without resorting to any military demonstration. The Premier himself attributed a great part of his success to the active support he had received from Sir Philip Currie, who had only recently taken up his position as British Ambassador at Constantinople. In common opinion, however, throughout Bulgaria, the whole thing was Stambouloff's doing. As soon as the news of the settlement became known in Sofia, a large crowd

proceeded with torchlights to M. Stambouloff's abode at Sofia. In reply to the cheers with which he was greeted, he came out on the balcony and made a speech appealing to the Bulgarians to display their special gratitude for the gracious concessions made by the Suzerain, and urging upon them the paramount necessity of keeping on good terms with Turkey as Bulgaria's best friend and ally.

How far this wise advice will be acted upon remains to be seen. But of this I am confident, that if ever a repetition of similar errors of policy on the part of the Porte should lead to a genuine national rising against Turkish rule in Macedonia, Bulgaria cannot and will not remain an indifferent spectator. The Bulgarians are determined not to forfeit their reversion to Macedonia, still less to allow it to be transferred to the Greeks. Though the Bulgarians object to the Russians on political grounds, they do not personally dislike the latter in the same way as they do the Greeks. Even as between Turks and Greeks they prefer the former. The truth is that the Greeks have all along been the agents of Turkish oppression in Bulgaria, and in such matters the agent is generally more unpopular than his employer. As it is, the permanent animosity which prevails between Greeks and Bulgarians may very possibly prove a not unimportant factor in determining the ultimate solution of the Eastern Question.

CHAPTER XXV.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS RUSSIA.

DREAD of Russian intervention forms, for the present, the dominant factor in the national policy of the Peasant State. I do not think, however, that this policy is influenced by any popular dislike of Russia as Russia. In all parts of the country there are monuments erected in honour of the Russians who took part in the War of Liberation, and I have never heard any Bulgarian, from the Prince downwards, express any feeling towards Russia other than one of respect and gratitude for the services their country has received from the great Sclav Empire of the north. In what I have written I may have seemed to show an undue bias towards the Bulgarian view of the controversy between herself and Russia. It is, however, quite possible to hold, as I do, that Bulgaria is in the right in opposing Russia, and at the same time to admit that the latter Power rendered signal services to the cause of Bulgarian independence, and may not unnaturally feel aggrieved at finding her policy thwarted by the very State she called into existence.

The truth is both Russia and Bulgaria entered on the war with Turkey under a mistaken impression as to each other's aims and objects. The Russian nation honestly believed that they were called upon by the Bulgarians to

come and deliver them from an intolerable tyranny; that so long as the Bulgarians were set free from the rule of the Crescent, they were indifferent to every other consideration; and that it was their desire and ambition to become in fact, if not in name, a province of the mighty Sclav Empire. This belief was in harmony with the religious fanaticism of the Russian people, with the theories of the Moscow school of patriots, whose ideal is the fusion of all the European Sclavonic races into one vast confederation under the hegemony of Russia, and with the personal sentiments of the late Czar. I think it probable enough that this belief was confirmed by the statements of the Bulgarian political exiles, who had taken refuge in Russia, and who naturally supported any view of the situation which was best calculated to induce the Russian Government to take up arms for the liberation of their country. It is not necessary to suppose that there was any intentional deceit on the part of the exiles, from whom the Russians received their impressions as to the state of feeling in Bulgaria previous to the war. Anybody who has ever been personally acquainted with exiles is aware that they one and all labour under the delusion that their return is the one thing which their country desires and prays for. It is therefore intelligible that the Russians should have honestly imagined that the kindred people, they were about to deliver from the domination of Islam, were anxious, as soon as their liberation was accomplished, to merge their separate identity in that of the great Sclav brotherhood.

At the same time the Bulgarians cannot be blamed if they failed to realize beforehand the true intentions of their liberators. With the view of disarming the possible

opposition of other European Powers, the Pan-Sclavonic aspect of Russian intervention in Bulgaria was kept sedulously in the background. Europe was assured that the sole object of holy Russia in making war upon Turkey was to free a people of kindred race, creed, and language to her own from Moslem oppression. These assurances coincided too closely with Bulgarian aspirations not to be accepted without questioning. I do not say that the Bulgarians were not most heartily desirous to be freed of Turkish rule. Nor do I assert that if they had been offered the alternative between continuing subject to Islam and becoming a province of the Russian Empire, they would not have accepted the latter arrangement. What I do assert is, that they would have accepted it reluctantly and without any kind of enthusiasm. Then as now, the one dominant instinct of the Bulgarians was the desire for independence, the wish to be once more a free people, ruling themselves after their own fashion. It is not easily intelligible to foreigners why the Bulgarians, under such endless vicissitudes and so many centuries of servitude, should have preserved so intense a sentiment of distinct nationality. But be the explanation what it may, the fact that they did entertain this sentiment is beyond dispute. If the Bulgarians had been told beforehand that the price of their liberation was to be absorption into Russia, I think it possible, if not probable, they would have been more than half disposed to wait until their deliverance from the hands of the "unspeakable Turk" could be effected without the surrender of the national independence.

Thus, when the Turks had finally been driven out of the country, there was a not unreasonable disappointment on the side of both Russians and Bulgarians. The former

were disappointed because the people they had liberated displayed the utmost reluctance in accepting the protection of their liberators; the latter were disappointed because their allies, after having accomplished their emancipation, did not leave them in possession of the independence for whose sake emancipation had been mainly desired. It was the old fable over again of the man, the horse, and the stag, with the sole difference that not only did the horse complain because the man refused to dismount after the stag was killed, but that the man considered the horse ungrateful for even wishing to be relieved of his burden.

An eminent Bulgarian public servant, who has seen much more of the outer world than most of his fellow-officials, remarked to me one day in the course of conversation that "the great defects of his countrymen were their inveterate belief in their capability to do everything for themselves after their own way and by their own people, and their excessive dislike to calling in the aid of foreigners in order to show them how things ought to be done." The Bulgarians are willing to go abroad in order to learn from foreigners, but they are not willing to be instructed by foreigners at home. If the Russians had taken the trouble to study the Bulgarian character, they would have realized that the people looked upon them as foreigners, and bitterly resented the filling up of all important and lucrative posts in the public service by Russian officials. In the days of the Protectorate the native politicians who had taken the leading part in preparing the way for Russian intervention were left out in the cold in the distribution of all official appointments. Moreover, the Russian administrators, civil as well as military, lost no opportunity of letting the Bulgarians feel

that in the eyes of their protectors they were a kingdom of peasants, who ought by rights to feel honoured at having Russians to instruct and govern them.

The specific cause of complaint which Bulgaria has against Russia, namely, her persistent refusal to recognize Prince Ferdinand, does not excite great indignation in the Principality. To the Court and to the Prince the lack of foreign recognition constitutes a valid grievance. But the mass of the population are utterly indifferent as to whether Prince Ferdinand is or is not acknowledged to be their legal ruler. To all practical intents and purposes he is as much a reigning Prince as if every monarch in Europe addressed him in writing as brother. The Bulgarian peasants care much more about solid facts than they do about formal titles. The Government, however, is not unnaturally annoyed at the obstinacy with which Russia deprives the country of the official status to which she is fairly entitled. I confess I can see little force in the argument, frequently employed by the partisans of recognition, that, Bulgaria being an independent State, the Powers who signed the Treaty of Berlin had no power to place any restriction on her right of independence. As Bulgaria could not have become autonomous unless the signatories of the Treaty of Berlin had been able to agree as to the terms upon which autonomy should be granted to her, it seems to me illogical for the Bulgarians to complain because they are expected to observe the terms prescribed in the Treaty. A more valid argument in favour of recognition is that Russia, of her own free will and pleasure, has decided to place an interpretation upon these terms which the Treaty was never intended to bear, and cannot fairly be said

to bear. The clause of the Treaty on the strength of which Russia bases her refusal to recognize the Saxe-Coburg dynasty of Bulgaria runs as follows:—"The Prince of Bulgaria shall be freely elected by the population of the country, and his election shall be confirmed by the Sublime Porte *after the assent of the Powers who took part in the Congress of Berlin.* No member of any of the reigning dynasties of the great European Powers may be elected Prince of Bulgaria. In case of a vacancy in the reigning dynasty" (which at the time the treaty was concluded was that of Prince Alexander of Battenburg), "the election of the new Prince shall take place under the same conditions and with the same forms." The contention of Russia is, that in this clause consent must be construed as signifying unanimous consent, and that, therefore, the refusal of any one of the seven Powers who signed the treaty to approve the choice of the Bulgarian National Assembly, is of itself a fatal bar to the Prince elected by the Sobranje ascending the throne. According to this contention, if England, Austria, Germany, France, Turkey, and Russia were unanimous in approving the selection of a prince freely chosen by the Grand Sobranje, while Greece did not approve, the Porte would not be justified in confirming the election, and the election itself would be absolutely null and void; a deduction which, in the words of Euclid, is an absurdity.

The Porte has all along made no secret of its readiness to confirm the election, but it has hitherto declined to do so owing to the representations of Russia. It is therefore Russia, and Russia alone, who forbids the recognition of Prince Ferdinand, and forbids it in virtue of a strained interpretation of a doubtful clause in the Treaty of Berlin,

without even assigning any ground for her objection to the Prince being recognized as the chosen ruler of Bulgaria, other than the one, that this recognition does not suit her own purposes. Still, the Bulgarians feel that this question is not one which calls urgently for any immediate solution. If Russia makes no active attempt to mark her displeasure, as she did in the case of Prince Alexander, the mere fact of her having delayed the recognition of his successor will not weigh heavily against her in Bulgarian sentiment. I have spoken already of the long series of offences committed by Russia against the national feeling of Bulgaria. It is enough to say that when the series culminated in the sudden recall of all the Russian officers on the eve of the Servian invasion, which in popular belief was instigated from St. Petersburg, the Bulgarians came to the conclusion that no consideration of gratitude for the services rendered by Russia towards their country's liberation could be allowed to militate any longer against the assertion of their absolute independence. From that day forward, the main object of Bulgarian statesmanship has been to render the Principality powerful enough to resist the re-imposition of any form of Russian protectorate.

Still, notwithstanding all that is past and gone, I do not think the Russians are personally unpopular in the country. By the community of language, race, and creed, which differentiates them both from the rest of Europe, Bulgarians and Russians are naturally drawn together. Though the Bulgars care very little for Pan-Sclav ideas, and are infinitely prouder of their own individual nationality than they are of their kinship with Russia, they have many ideas, interests, and ambitions in common. If ever Russia makes up her mind to accept the independence of

Bulgaria as an accomplished fact, she will have little difficulty in recovering even more than her legitimate influence with the Bulgarian people, as well as with the Bulgarian Government. It is on this account that M. Stambouloff and M. Grekoff, the singularly able Minister of Foreign Affairs in the late Ministry, always declined to make any effort to force the hand of Russia, with the view of obtaining Prince Ferdinand's recognition. They both asserted, to my knowledge, that the advantages of recognition would be far more than counterbalanced by the fact that, upon recognition, Russia would have a Minister at Sofia and Consuls all over the country, and that both the Legation and the Consulates would inevitably become centres of intrigue against the existing *régime*. The Prince naturally enough did not share this opinion, and the divergence of view between himself and the Ministry on this subject was, I am convinced, one of the main causes of the crisis which ended in M. Stambouloff's resignation.

PROVINCES OF THE PEASANT STATE.

CHAPTER XXVI.

RUSTSCHUK.

POLITICALLY, Roumania may be the friend of Bulgaria; but the friendship is one of common interests, not of common sympathies. The two countries are utterly different, and though so near each other in distance, are separated by fundamental differences of race, language, and religion. Given the degree of civilization that the two States, separated by the Danube, have respectively attained, the contrast between them, both in their moral and material aspects, is as great as that which marks the transit from England into France. If a foreigner wishes to hear an unfavourable opinion of the Bulgarians, he has only got to speak on the subject to the first Roumanian he may happen to meet. He is certain to be told that the Bulgars are ignorant, stupid, and brutal, and that they have no pretensions to be called civilized. If you cite the rapid development of Sofia as a proof of the remarkable progress that Bulgaria has already made, you are met with the remark that Sofia is only an artificial product of

the Court, and that, outside the Capital, Bulgaria remains the same as she was in the old Turkish days. I have heard similar assertions made in Bulgaria by persons who, for one cause or another, were hostile to the new order of things ; and therefore I was anxious to judge for myself what progress was visible in the chief and provincial towns of the Principality, which lie completely outside the influence of the metropolis. Though, counted by miles, the actual distances between these towns are small, yet, counted by the time and difficulties of transit, these distances are infinitely greater than those which separate the Land's End from John o' Groat's. Whatever progress the provincial towns of Bulgaria have made has, in consequence, been due far more to their own initiative than to any action of the central Government.

Some five and twenty years ago it was my fortune to visit the northern districts of Bulgaria. At this time the whole country was under Turkish rule, and the Bulgarian question had hardly begun to attract the notice of the European public. Rustschuk had left a strong impression on my mind, as it happened to be the first place I ever set foot in where the Crescent ruled above the Cross, where I first saw in the flesh Turkish officials in red fezes and Stamboli coats, Bashi-Bazouks, and veiled Turkish ladies. Even then Rustschuk was not the East, but it was very near the East, and the first vision of the Orient, however imperfect and incomplete it may be, is one that makes an indelible impression upon the Western mind. In the days of which I speak Rustschuk was a squalid Turkish village, with a small European quarter, facing the Danube. This quarter consisted, if my recollection serves me, of a German inn, which was more of a pot-house than an hotel, of a

Teutonic beer-garden, of half a dozen warehouses, of a Custom-house, a railway station, and a few stores and offices, all situated on the low bluffs that rise above the southern banks of the Danube at this part of its course. At the period of my first visit Rustschuk was a place of some local importance as the western terminus of the Varna-Rustschuk line, which formed a link in the new route between Constantinople and the West. Previous to the completion of the Orient Railway, some few years ago, all travellers from the West, who were not inclined to make the tedious sea-journey from Marseilles, availed themselves of this new route, which owed its existence to the ill-requited energy of an English company. An express train was run twice a week from Vienna through Buda Pesth to Bazias, an obscure Hungarian port on the Danube, some little distance east of Belgrade. From Bazias the Austrian Lloyd steamers carried the passengers down the Danube to Rustschuk. The river transit was a long day's journey, made all the longer by the necessity of transshipment into a smaller boat in order to pass the rapids at the Iron Gates. As a rule you reached Rustschuk too late to proceed the same night to Varna. Next morning you traversed Bulgaria by rail and embarked in the evening at Varna on the steamboat, which, if the weather was favourable, landed you next day at Constantinople. At the time I am speaking of, this route, circuitous and inconvenient as it was, formed the chief channel of communication between the East and the West; and Rustschuk profited greatly by the traffic which the new route brought into the little Bulgarian village. With the opening of the Orient Railway the Varna-Rustschuk line saw the last of its short-lived importance. To some small extent the

route may still be used by travellers to the Bosphorus from Roumania or Russia, but even in their case the Belgrade-Sofia-Constantinople line is the most convenient, though the longest in actual distance. Practically, the traffic which first made Rustschuk a place of importance is at an end, and though it is possible the construction of the proposed line from Sofia to Shumla may ultimately make Rustschuk a station on the main route between the West and the Ægean Sea, this is all in the future, and an uncertain future, too, into the bargain.

I expected, therefore, to find Rustschuk bearing the familiar aspect of a place which was once of importance as a centre of traffic, but which has ceased to be so when its reason of being was withdrawn, owing to the traffic having shifted elsewhere. This expectation was confirmed when, instead of the multitude of passengers of all nationalties whom I recollect on board the vessel which had landed me at Rustschuk in 1869, I found myself almost the sole passenger in the heavy, freight-laden steamer of the Danubian Company, plying between Galatz and Pesth, which carried me across the river from Giurgevo in Roumania to Rustschuk in Bulgaria. During the brief transit, we passed in mid-stream the half-sunken hull of a Turkish ironclad, which had been blown up by the Russians when they bombarded Rustschuk. No attempt had been made to raise the hull, and an island was forming rapidly around it by the silt of the river. The royal yacht of Prince Ferdinand lay at anchor off the town, together with a couple of Bulgarian gun-boats and a score or so of the quaint caravels, with high peaks rising above their flat shallow decks, which still carry most of the traffic on the Lower Danube. On a fine day it is a pleasure to sit on

the bluffs of Rustschuk, and to gaze upon the broad expanse of the grand river, covered with numbers of these old-world vessels beating gallantly up stream, with their huge, white foresails bulging out beneath the breeze, or drifting downwards with the current, their masts bare and their sails furled. Save that there was more shipping, the river-side scene seemed to me much the same as my memory recalled it. But looking shorewards the whole aspect of the town was new. On the brow of the low mud bluffs there were a number of well-built, detached villas, standing in their own grounds, the chief, though hardly the most luxurious, being a châlet which had been built for Prince Alexander as his summer residence. Here, as elsewhere in Bulgaria, these villas had little claim to architectural distinction. They were the dwellings of well-to-do people, with Western notions of comfort rather than luxury. Most of them, I learnt, were the property of Greek or Jewish merchants whose business caused them nowadays to reside at Rustschuk.

On the summit of the bluffs a new, broad, well-paved street, lined with inns, offices, and shops, led up to the modern town, and ended in the old Turkish quarter. Here, as in Sofia, all the buildings were of the kind one sees in every prosperous, second-class South German town. There were banks, barracks, public offices, and schools, every one of which might have been transported bodily from any German city you liked to name between Mayence and Brunn. The shops were well stocked, and displayed a larger store of the luxuries of Western civilization than you would find even in Sofia. There was, too, a far greater look of busy trade and commercial activity than you noticed in the Bulgarian capital.

Otherwise the general aspect of the two towns was much the same. There was the same absence of places of amusement, of spacious cafés, and of large hotels. Everything was quiet, simple, and almost sombre. It is only fair to say that the new Rustschuk dates its origin from the days of Turkish rule. It was here that Midhat Pasha resided when he was governor of the vilayet of the Danube. It was here, too, that he made his first attempt to carry out the reforms which, in his belief, were to accomplish the regeneration of the Ottoman Empire, and which ended in his own destruction. It was part of his policy to convert Rustschuk into a sort of Ottoman Manchester; and, of all his grandiose conceptions, the high street of this Danubian city is almost the only relic which has survived his fall. Here, at any rate, Midhat's memory is honoured; and it is a standing grievance with the people of the northern province that, when Bulgaria became independent, Rustschuk was not chosen as the site of the metropolis. The real objections to its choice as the Capital were, I suspect, its proximity to Roumania and the fact that so large a proportion of its population were Mussulmen at the time when Bulgaria achieved her independence. Even now, if you leave the main streets, you find yourself in a Turkish village, which has changed but little during the last five and twenty years, or, for that matter, during the last two centuries. The old town is as tumbledown, as squalid, as ill-paved, and as forlorn-looking as I remember it on the occasion of my first visit. The general look of decay which characterizes all Turkish towns I have ever visited seemed to me to be even more marked in old Rustschuk than it used to be. This impression is not, I think, a mere fancy. When the Russians

bombarded the town from the northern banks of the Danube, they contrived to acquaint themselves beforehand with the situation of the different localities in the city. They left the modern town, in which the houses are mainly owned by Bulgarian Christians, untouched, and directed their fire against the Turkish quarter. The Russian shells knocked down a large number of houses in this quarter, and these houses have never been rebuilt. Then, too, the Mahommedan population of Rustschuk are out of joint with the new order of things, and have left their homes to take refuge in lands where Islam is still the dominant creed ; and, as a result, a large number of Turkish dwellings have been left empty and are rapidly falling to pieces. The minarets, however, still taper gracefully towards the sky ; the muezzins still call out the hours of prayer ; the turban is still the common head-dress of the men ; there are still veiled women to be met with in the streets ; and the dull, sober tone of a Bulgarian city is still, to some extent, enlivened by the bright hues and tints of the Eastern world.

The inhabitants of Rustschuk claim that their town has increased so rapidly in population that it contains some five thousand more inhabitants than Sofia. This may be so, but the place did not impress me as covering anything like the area of the capital, though, owing to the comparatively large proportion of Turkish dwellings, in which it is always difficult to ascertain the exact number of the inhabitants, the total population may easily be more dense than it appears to be. The majority of the inhabitants are still Moslems or Jews by religion, and even of the Christian population the larger portion are Roumanians and Austrians. The explanation of this fact is

that Rustschuk is essentially a commercial city, and that the Bulgarians do not, as a rule, take kindly to trade, except of a retail kind. The small shops, dealing in the local wares of which Rustschuk is the mart, are mainly owned by Bulgarians. But the warehouses and stores, where the goods imported from abroad are stocked, and where speculative sales and purchases are made in the hope of potential profit, are almost entirely in the hands of Greeks and Jews. The Bulgarians, with few exceptions, have not the knowledge of foreign languages, or the experience of foreign countries, requisite for import and export trade, if conducted on a large scale. The instincts, too, of a peasant race are averse to the element of speculation which lies at the bottom of all international commerce. It may seem strange that the absence of the speculative instinct should be characteristic of a race whose chief social recreation consists in card-playing. The anomaly is apparent rather than real. The Bulgarian plays cards, not only because the occupation amuses him, but because he has, or fancies he has, somewhat the best of his fellow-players either in luck or skill. It is one thing to stake your money on cards you can see and handle ; it is another to run a risk on transactions concluded out of your sight, and lying outside your immediate personal control. At any rate, this is the explanation given me of the fact that a race addicted to one particular form of speculation, and certainly possessed of an aptitude for trade upon a small scale, should yet show a marked distaste for wholesale commerce. The same explanation accounts for the circumstance that lotteries and races, which are popular in Roumania, Hungary, and Servia, are utterly unknown in Bulgaria.

However this may be, the spirit of financial enterprise is beginning to make way in Rustschuk. Just before I arrived there the annual meeting of a local insurance company had been held. The company in question was founded here three or four years ago for insuring against fires; the fire insurance business succeeded so well that the company deemed it advisable to start a life assurance branch, and for this purpose has recently issued five thousand shares of £4 each, which were subscribed for by the inhabitants of the town at a premium of twelve and sixpence a share, the amount of shares issued being subscribed three times over. The profit on last year's business was £10,000, out of which a dividend of 12 per cent. was declared, and the sum of £1000 was carried to the reserve fund. Trade in Rustschuk has flourished greatly under the new *régime*. The town has become the market for the wide plains lying between the Danube and the northern slopes of the Balkans. Grain is the chief article of export, Manchester goods and British coals the chief articles of import. This being the case, it is strange that there should be no English merchants in the place. The trade between England and Bulgaria, which used to be the chief foreign trade in the Principality, is carried on from the ports of Rustschuk, Varna, and Bourgas. But in no one of these places is there an English firm of any consequence. The business is done through Greek and Jew houses. However, so long as the merchants of Rustschuk buy English goods and charter English vessels, I do not suppose it makes much difference to the English manufacturers and traders whether they deal with their own fellow-countrymen or with foreigners.

Rustschuk, I should say, from a social point of view, is

better off than Sofia, though the place is about as dull as any civilized city well could be. Rustschuk, moreover, possesses the advantage over Sofia that the representatives of foreign Powers, who here, as at Sofia, form the chief social element, are not hampered by the presence of a Court, with which most of them are not allowed to enter into social relations. Then, too, there are a certain number of well-to-do and well-educated merchants residing in the commercial capital of Bulgaria, while no such class exists in the political metropolis. The climate of Rustschuk is infinitely warmer than that of the high plateaus south of the Balkans ; and though there is no circle of lofty hills engirdling Rustschuk, yet their absence is atoned for by the presence of the Danube rolling at the feet of the cliff upon which the modern town is built. Owing to its position, there is hardly a house in the new quarter from which you cannot command a view of the river ; and I am not surprised if foreigners, who have resided at Rustschuk, acquire an attachment to the place, which Sofia does not, I think, possess the power of inspiring. Moreover, the river-port of Bulgaria has the charm of being within easy reach of Bucharest. The condition of Bulgaria may be, as I hold, sounder, simpler, more virile, and fuller of future promise than that of Roumania ; still, however exalted a view you may take of the duties of life and of its mission, there is to ordinary, unregenerate human nature a certain satisfaction in being within easy access of Vanity Fair. In a couple of hours you can transport yourself from Rustschuk to a city where there are handsome shops, luxurious restaurants, theatres, book-stalls, promenades, and well-dressed women, and where every attempt is made to satisfy to the full the desires of the world and the flesh,

not to mention the devil. Even if your sober judgment bids you prefer the primitive simplicity of Bulgarian life, it is a comfort to feel, as you do at Rustchuk, that if the fancy seizes you, the luxuries of the West lie close at hand.

CHAPTER XXVII.

VARNA.

THE distance from Rustschuk to Varna is about a hundred and forty miles. The one train which makes the journey daily, takes over ten hours in the transit, so that the speed, including stoppages, which though frequent are not lengthy, is at the rate of fourteen miles an hour.

Until you approach Varna there is little of any kind in the look of the country to attract a traveller's attention. For mile after mile you traverse a wide expanse of low, rolling hills, recalling in its apparent solitude and in its unchanging monotony the South African veldt. There is, however, this marked difference, that, though the traces of human habitations are few and far between, the whole country-side is covered, as far as the eye can reach, with cultivated fields, in which, at the time I traversed it, the young green wheat-stalks were sprouting in every direction. On the pasture lands, immense herds and flocks were grazing lazily. Every now and then I caught sight of a field being ploughed by the most rudimentary of ploughs, drawn by a yoke of buffaloes; but, with the exception of the herdsman and the ploughman, I saw hardly a trace of field labourers. The month of April is a slack season in Bulgarian agriculture. The sowing time is well-nigh over, and the crops are not yet ripe for

gathering. Still, even making allowance for the season, it was difficult to imagine whence the labour had come from, which had brought all this vast extent of ground under cultivation. The peasants herd together in the villages, and the villages are for the most part situated in the hollows, partly from the desire to find shelter from the winds in winter and shade from the sun in summer, partly from the hereditary instinct, derived from the old Turkish times, which leads the Bulgarian peasant to keep his home as much out of sight as possible. I have no doubt, therefore, that the population of this northern plateau of the Balkans, which forms one of the richest agricultural districts of the Principality, must be far larger than one would guess from the glimpses one gets of it out of the windows of a railway carriage. I hear on every side that the increasing exodus of the Mussulman population from this part of Bulgaria is a matter of serious anxiety. The Tomaks make no complaint as to their treatment by the Government. As against the Administration they have no grievances; they are offered exemption from military service on easy terms; but, notwithstanding all this, they object to dwelling in a country where the faith of Islam is not dominant. In many instances they are selling off their lands to their Christian neighbours; and if the present emigration goes on, the mosques one sees in every village hereabouts will in a few years' time be left without worshippers. As yet, however, the Mahommedan element remains supreme in the districts of Bulgaria which lie between Rustschuk and Varna. At the roadside stations, porters, passengers, and loafers, with scarcely an exception, wore the turban, and had the look, as well as the garb, of a race distinct from that of the Bulgarians south of

the Balkan Mountains. I was assured at Sofia that the Tomaks were Bulgarians by birth and descent and nationality, whose sole difference from their Christian fellow-countrymen lay in the accident that their fore-fathers had embraced Mahommedanism during the Turkish era. This may be so, but I find it very hard to believe that it is. Possibly, under the harem system, there may have been a large intermixture of foreign blood in the families of the Bulgarians who turned Mahommedans. But be the cause what it may, the Tomaks are as different from the ordinary Bulgarian in features, figure, gait, and aspect, as the Arab of Egypt is from the fellah. Tall, spare, and active, with clear-cut features, upright gait, and heads well placed on massive shoulders, they form a strange contrast to the sheepskin-clad peasants south of the Balkans. Their dress, the turban with many folds, the linen shirt of variegated colours, bound tightly round the waist with a broad red sash, seems to fit the wearer as a costume ought to do, not to be huddled on as a mere covering against the cold. They walk instead of slouching; they look you boldly in the face, which the Bulgarian peasant is not wont to do. They possess the indescribable air of people who belong, or deem themselves to belong, to a master race. I am not in the least disposed to underrate the extra-ordinary power which the creed of Islam exercises upon its adherents. But the fact of the Tomaks having for several generations regarded Mecca, and not Jerusalem, as the sacred shrine of their faith cannot, it seems to me, have altered their stature, their build, their features, their complexion, and their gait. The Tomaks may be Bul-garians by race as well as birth, but I question greatly their being Sclavs.

At all the stations at which the train made halt, nine-tenths at least of the people who crowded the platforms and lounged about the approaches were Moslems. There were dervishes with the green turbans which only holy men who have visited the tomb of the Prophet are entitled to wear ; there were women, bundles of black clothing, with henna-stained eyes, looking out from between the folds of white linen which concealed their faces, and waddling, as only Turkish women can waddle. There were any number of squat, square-built, clean-skinned Turkish children, looking like baby Pashas. The crowd were chattering, laughing, and calling to each other, instead of maintaining a stolid silence, as a gathering of Bulgarian peasants is apt to do. The old men, of whom there were not a few, and who, in spite of their grey beards and wrinkled faces, still looked hale and upright, bore for the most part in their hands the strings of beads, which their fingers moved mechanically to and fro as they repeated to themselves the attributes and titles of Allah, the one God of whom Mahomet is the prophet. Everywhere there were signs of the country being still inhabited by a Mahommedan population. The men in the fields, who drove the ploughs and watched the herds, were all wearers of the turban. The villages were composed entirely of the square, white-washed houses, with low, overhanging roofs and lattice windows, which are to be seen in every Turkish hamlet. For many a long mile I never caught sight of a church, but in every village there was a mosque, if not a minaret. Outside the villages you could see the bare, unenclosed Turkish burying-grounds, where the sheep were browsing between the countless tombstones, which lay scattered over the

ground, or stood inclined towards each other at every possible angle. In warmer climes these Moslem grave-yards, where the villagers sit smoking upon the tomb-stones, where the children are playing games, and where the bright-eyed lizards keep popping in and out between the headstones of the dead, always seem to me more cheerful and more homelike, if I may use the word, than the cemeteries of our Christian faith. But here, in this bare, bleak land and this chill wintry air, the burial-grounds of the Mahommedan villages look the very desolation of desolation. They will scarcely look more desolate in the days, which cannot be far distant, when the Tomaks have left their old homes for new abodes, where they will be surrounded by the people of the Prophet. I was told by a fellow-traveller that, even at present, the Tomaks get on comfortably enough in this part of the country so long as they are in sufficient numbers to form a community of their own in the villages in which they dwell. The difficulties arise as Christians begin to settle in their immediate neighbour-hood ; and in nine cases out of ten the cause of quarrel is the presence of pigs. In the old Turkish days the Bulgarian peasants were not allowed to keep the animal accursed by Mahomet in any village where there were followers of Islam. Nowadays they have the right to keep pigs if they please ; and it is only in human nature that they should derive a certain amount of satisfaction from the fact of the exercise of their newly won rights being obnoxious to their Mahommedan neighbours. The pig, being a gregarious animal, and indifferent to religious prejudices, strays into Mahommedan farmyards, and even forces his way into Mahommedan houses. The accident

of the pig's entry, if accident it is, is regarded by the Tomak as a studied insult to his creed. Ill blood arises between the Christian and Mahommedan inhabitants of the village. The Tomak finally finds life unbearable in his old country home, and drifts forth into lands where Islam still rules, and the pig is not allowed to contaminate the dwellings of the faithful.

As the train begins to descend from the plateau, which it has taken hours in ascending from the Danube, you pass through narrow valleys, hemmed in by high hills, crested with stone ridges on their summit. The country is well watered ; the villages seem more prosperous ; on the hillsides there are vineyards everywhere ; and the fresh, keen salt breeze is proof that the Black Sea is close at hand. Three times during the journey our passports were examined, and the names of the passengers by the train were inspected to see that they corresponded with a written list. I was told that this precaution was unusual, but that orders had been received from Sofia by the officials of the line to be on the look-out for some person who had incurred the suspicion of M. Stambouloff's Government. The last inspection took place immediately before we entered the town of Varna.

There are as yet no quays in the Liverpool of Bulgaria. In the open bay, which serves fairly well as a roadstead except when the wind is blowing towards the shore, there were a score of steamers lying at anchor, some getting up steam, some unloading their freight into lighters, some taking in freight from the barges moored alongside. Out at sea there were a number of sailing ships tacking to make the harbour. Most of the steamers were English ; the ships hailed mainly from Russia,

Roumania, and Turkey. Next year a line of Bulgarian steamboats will ply between Varna and the Levant under the flag of the Principality. The steamers of this new line are now being constructed in England. The paid-up capital of the company, to which the Government has agreed to guarantee a subsidy of nine per cent., was subscribed in Bulgaria, mainly, I fancy, by the foreign residents who carry on business at Varna and Bourgas. The Government has also undertaken to improve the harbours of these two ports. The contract for the Bourgas works has already been taken up by a Belgian firm. The plans of the improvements which it is proposed to make in the port of Varna have not yet been definitely settled, and the construction of the necessary works is not to be commenced till next year. It is understood, however, that the improvements will include the making of a breakwater, so that vessels may always lie at safety within the bay, no matter from what quarter the wind may blow, and the erection of quays, so that ships of large burden may load and unload without employing lighters. When these improvements are made, the merchants of Varna consider that their town will be the most commodious and cheapest port for the grain trade of any in the Black Sea. In consequence, land in or near Varna is rapidly being bought up, under the belief that it is likely before long to increase very largely in value.

The transformation of Varna, since the War of Liberation, has not been as rapid and as marked as it has been elsewhere. The reason of this is, I am assured, the following. The port dues belong to the State, and their rapid increase during the last few years has not, therefore, directly benefited the revenues of the city. The local

municipality possesses an income of about twenty thousand pounds a year, derived chiefly from the octroi and the house-tax. Out of this income the municipality have determined to rebuild the city and replace the old tumble-down Turkish quarter by broad streets and modern dwellings after the model of Sofia. But the instinct of economy, which is characteristic of every Bulgarian administration, has retarded the progress of these town improvements. The occupants of the old houses, which it was proposed to pull down, naturally enough demanded large compensation. As their tenancies were rapidly running out, the municipality of Varna decided that, instead of raising a loan to provide compensation for the tenants of the expropriated houses, it was wiser to husband their resources and to pull down the houses one by one as the existing tenancies expired. As yet, therefore, only one broad main street has been constructed, which leads directly from the port up to the cliffs on which the modern city is situated. Meanwhile the squalid, ill-paved streets of the Turkish quarter remain much as they were. In the new town, looking out upon the sea, the municipality have built a cathedral, several public offices, and a really handsome school-house, which must have cost nearly a year's revenue. They have also laid out a public park which, when the trees have grown up, will furnish a very pleasant resort for the townspeople. The chief evidence, however, of the increasing prosperity of Varna is to be found in the large number of handsome private houses erected on the bluffs.

About four miles to the north of Varna, Prince Ferdinand has built, at his own expense, a summer palace,

where he spends his time as a rule from July to the end of September. Varna is rapidly becoming the favourite watering-place of Bulgaria, and all along the road leading from the town to the royal residence, there are villas built as seaside residences. I cannot say that they add much to the beauty of the landscape, but they indicate the wealth and prosperity of the city, whose citizens can afford to have a country-house as well as a town-house. Prince Ferdinand's palace is beautifully situated on the seashore, and commands a magnificent view of the sea. Beyond looking extremely comfortable and costly, it has no especial character of its own. It is built on the site of an old monastery, whose chapel still forms part of the outbuildings. The idea of erecting a summer palace near Varna had been formed by Prince Alexander, and the ground for this purpose had been procured during his reign. But the Prince, who had very small private means, only proposed to build a sort of rough shooting-box. The château, as it stands, was planned and designed by Prince Ferdinand, and was furnished from England by Messrs. Maple's establishment. Prince Ferdinand is fond of saying that the goods consigned to him by Messrs. Maple were the only articles employed in the construction of the palace on which he had received fair value for his money.

On the road to the palace you pass the English Cemetery, where our soldiers, who died at the hospital of Varna during the Crimean War, lie buried. I was glad to notice that it was kept in good repair and order.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BOURGAS.

A steamboat, to make a remark which is certainly not novel, but which still more certainly is true, is a microcosm of the country between whose ports it plies. The remark holds good of the tug—for it deserves no other name—which conveys the traffic between Varna and Bourgas, the chief, if not the only, seaports of the Principality. As the crow flies, the two towns are scarcely fifty miles apart. There is a road between the two, but it is very rough, very hilly, and very precipitous, as it has to make all sorts of detours to avoid the bays and creeks with which the Bulgarian coast is indented. There are no public conveyances of any kind in Bulgaria other than the railroads, and to make the journey by land would require about a day and night of constant and wearisome travelling. M. Stambouloff, who has an extreme dislike to the sea, was in the habit of going by land from Bourgas to Varna when he wished to visit the Prince at his seaside residence. But, even when every preparation was made beforehand for his journey, he failed to do the distance under some eighteen hours. For ordinary travellers, the only practical way of getting from Varna to Bourgas is to take the steamer, which makes two journeys a week each way. The passage is calculated to occupy seven hours, but its duration, and

even its accomplishment, depend entirely upon the weather. At both ports you have to land in boats; and, if the weather is rough—and in the Black Sea it generally is rough—the steamer runs for the nearest shelter or returns to its port of departure without being able to disembark its passengers. Some day or other the railroad will be continued from Bourgas to Varna. But there are any number of more pressing lines calling for construction; and I fancy the two rival ports of Bulgaria are not very keen about facilitating communication with each other, as neither of them is certain which would lose or gain most by access from one to another being rendered easy. At any rate the bi-weekly-tug boat seems to satisfy the requirements of Varna and Bourgas alike.

I was assured at the Varna office that I must be on board by ten, as the steamer was under contract to leave the moment that the mails were delivered. Going down to the pier I met the mail-cart returning empty. I saw, however, there was no cause for hurry, as the steamer was still surrounded by lighters shipping freight for Bourgas. The weather was bright, the sun hot, but it was blowing a north-easter, and my boat took nearly ten minutes' hard rowing to get over the distance of some two hundred yards at which the steamer lay from the shore. An hour and a half more were spent in transferring two hundred sacks of flour from the lighters to the steamer. In each barge there was only a single sailor, who had to lift the sacks, every one of which must have weighed a hundredweight, place five of them one on top of the other, bind the rope round them, and then hitch the rope to the steam-crane, which hoisted the sacks from the lighter into the steam-boat's hold. Half a dozen boatmen could have done the

work in a quarter of an hour, but time is of no great value in this country; and it is contrary to Bulgarian ideas of economy to pay six men, when one man can be got to do the work, even if he takes six times longer in doing it.

However, everything in this world comes to an end, even the loading of a Bulgarian freight steamer. When the work was finished, the hold was full to overflowing, the deck was covered with a miscellaneous cargo, piled up in utter disregard of the regulations which have been introduced into the loading of English vessels by the action of Mr. Plimsoll. Upon the deck there were huge crates which hailed from Liverpool, a cottage piano from Vienna, large stacks of firewood, poultry coops, rows of wooden chairs, coils of rope, and any number of bundles, sacks, bags, mattresses, and pillows. In order to make your way from the stern to the bows—though the way was a very short one, twenty paces at most—you had to pick your path through a winding maze of chests and trunks and boxes. Very few of the latter bore traces of Western manufacture. They were, for the most part, home-made, studded with brass nails, painted with many colours, fastened with quaint locks and innumerable cords, and possessed of more corners than seemed possibly consistent with their size and shape. In every vacant space between the casks and boxes, what I may call the overflow of the passengers crouched and squatted. There is no such thing as a limit to the number of passengers a Bulgarian steamer may carry, and the bulk of the passengers had come early and taken possession of the deck. The cabin, with its half-dozen grimy, squalid berths, was fully occupied. The foulness of the air, combined

with the odour of bilge water, the stench of greasy cooking and of inferior garlic, as well as that special scent peculiar to steamboat cabins all the world over, rendered it untenable, except by natives who were utterly prostrated by sea-sickness. No attempt, I should think, had ever been made within living memory to clean the vessel or swab the decks. If any such attempt had been made, it had assuredly proved unsuccessful. The only seat I could find vacant was on the top of a wine-butt. The seat, such as it was, had the merit of keeping your feet clear of the greasy, sloppy deck, over which the water washed every time the steamer rolled. The sea, as we are told by Euripides, if my memory serves me right, cleanses everything, but it failed to wash one coating of dirt off the deck of our steamer. Luckily, we had a stern wind, so that the vessel did not plunge, but she rolled steadily from the time we left the shelter of Varna down to that at which we got under the headland protecting Bourgas.

Everybody almost was ill. For me, fortunately, the sea has no terrors, in as far as my stomach is concerned; and the scene on the deck was curious enough to interest anybody for whom it possessed the charm of novelty. A Belgian gentleman, who, I gathered, was connected with the contract for the construction of the Bourgas breakwaters, was the only first-class passenger besides myself. But, as the steerage passengers had the run of the ship equally with ourselves, I do not know that we derived any practical benefit from the distinction. There were not many foreigners on board of any kind. I noticed three Italian masons, who were going to Bourgas to look out for work on the breakwater; a German clerk, who

was being sent to Bourgas to learn Bulgarian in a German firm which does business there; and a Russian Jew, who was apparently in the old-clothes line, and who carried that part of his stock-in-trade, for which he could not find a purchaser at any price, upon his own person. But I should think that of the some hundred passengers stowed away in our little cockle-shell of a steamer, fully ninety were Bulgarians. We had half a dozen or so native soldiers in uniform. Even when under drill and at attention, the Bulgarian soldier, brave as he undoubtedly is, has not much of a military air. When he is off duty and out of sight of his officers, he looks just like what he is in reality, a sturdy, clumsily built ploughboy, stuck into an ill-fitting uniform, which he has never yet acquired the art of wearing. The soldiers on our boat sprawled upon the deck—their huge, high-booted legs seemed to stretch in every direction; they were eating apples and onions all day long, but they were quite sober, very quiet, and extremely good-natured. There were any number of Bulgarian peasants clad in sheepskins, and a good many clerks and shopmen and their wives and children, all of them untidy, all shabby, and all looking as if they had not of late been addicted to washing. The passengers lay in layers on the wet deck; the women bare-headed, except for a soiled handkerchief tied round their foreheads, and most of them with bonnet-boxes under their arms. Men, women, and children alike were all victims to sea-sickness. Basins were unknown—when the sufferers could manage it, they staggered to the ship's side; when their strength was not equal to the task of moving, they were simply sick on the ground where they lay. But what struck me most was the perfect quiet and good

nature of the crowd, even amidst their personal discomfort. In the intervals of temporary relief from the spasms of sea-sickness they chatted, not only with one another, but with the sailors and stokers, who all seemed to be personal acquaintances of the passengers. When the vessel rolled —and she rolled so that one could hardly feel sure whether she would ever recover her balance—the passengers remained tranquil. The women never screamed, and, as the crates and boxes in rolling from one side of the deck to the other cannoned against them, they simply turned round and tried ineffectually to cover themselves beneath their soaked wraps and drenched sheepskins. It is impossible to say beforehand how any body of people will behave in moments of extreme excitement. But, speculating idly, as one is apt to do under such circumstances, as to what might happen with our overloaded and obstructed deck, our feeble, broken-down engine, and our one small, leaky boat, supposing the gale to rise into a storm, it was satisfactory to note the great apparent self-possession of the Bulgarian passengers. Indeed, the only indication of any notice being taken by anybody of the plight of the vessel was on the part of two Turkish women, lying huddled on the deck, who, between the accesses of sea-sickness, kept mumbling some kind of prayer, in which the words "Allah El Allah" occurred again and again. Their husband, who bore the sea somewhat better than most of the passengers, left his wives to look after themselves, and smoked incessantly, while his fingers were always passing to and fro the wooden beads of his rosary, so that it is possible that he too was praying mentally. I was told by the captain, who had made a voyage to England and spoke a little English, that the

husband was a Tomak, who had occupied some small post in the public service, but who had thrown it up because he had made up his mind to flit to Asia Minor, where he could live amongst people of his own religion. Alongside the women of his harem there were piled masses of pots and pans, curtains, bedding, and the various utensils of a peasant's household, most of them cracked and broken, and all bearing the impress of the *res angusta domi.* The evicted tenants in Ireland, who are turned out of their cottages because they decline to pay rent, never appeal strongly to my personal sympathies. These poor Tomaks, followers of a defeated faith, who of their own free will leave home and country, part with their lands, and give up their livelihoods in order that they may live henceforward amidst the followers of the Prophet, seemed to me far worthier of respect than the victims of Saxon oppression in the distressful country.

One of the innumerable ranges of the Balkans runs along the sea-coast of Bulgaria between Varna and Bourgas. Dense, black clouds hung all day over the cliffs to the west, while on the east the sky was blue and clear. The consequence was that we could see but little of the coast, which we skirted for hours, rounding one headland, half enshrouded in the mist, only to see another headland stretching miles away, half hid amidst the gloom of the overclouded afternoon. Still I could catch glimpses enough to be sure that the sides of the slopes running down to the sea were seldom cultivated, and that the coast was very sparsely peopled. In a run of fifty miles, during all of which we were close in sight of land, I could only note three villages and a dozen whitewashed buildings, which were probably coastguard stations or watch-towers.

The sun was sinking as our steamer doubled the last promontory, and we found ourselves in comparatively smooth water, under the shelter of the long tongue of sand which juts out into the sea to the north of Bourgas, and serves as a sort of natural breakwater. In fact, the Bay of Bourgas is better land-locked than that of Varna. But I am told by inhabitants of the former port that the roads inside the bay are not as secure or as easy of access as those of their own port. How this may be I do not pretend to decide. All I can say is, that the landing is equally uncomfortable and equally inconvenient in both ports. In justice, I ought to add that at both places travellers are equally exempt from the exactions which usually accompany the process of landing in boats. It has been my fate to embark and disembark in many parts of the world at a large number of ports. I can truly say that at one and all rapacity and bullying are the dominant characteristics of a maritime population, no matter to what country, race, or creed they may happen to belong. Indeed, for cool and brazen extortion, I am not certain I would not back a British boatman in the Thames below London Bridge against any of his compeers in foreign ports. But the Bulgarians are exceptions to my experience of the 'long-shore fraternity. They are moderate in their charges, and do not take advantage of a traveller being a stranger to make him pay more than they would ask of the natives. They do not shout and scream and fight, as the boatmen of Levantine ports are wont to do. They are slow but civil, and, in accordance with the customs of their country, they never ask for backscheesh. I have never, to my knowledge, been overcharged in Bulgaria by any cabdriver or boatman, and,

what is more, I have never been troubled by an importunate beggar. It may be that, with a population so frugal as Bulgaria, begging is found to be an unprofitable trade. But, be the cause what it may, street begging, which is rife in Turkey and all over the Levant, is practically unknown in Bulgaria.

I was struck, too, by an incident of my passage to Bourgas, which could hardly have occurred elsewhere. The railroad comes down to the quays, or rather to the shore where the quays are to be erected, and the station is simply a large wooden shed open at both ends. I had some hours to wait before the train started by which I was to proceed to Jamboli; and, on going to leave my luggage before visiting the town, I found that the booking offices were all closed, and that there was nobody to take charge of my trunks. The whole floor of the shed was strewed over with piles of luggage belonging to passengers in the same plight as myself. There was nobody in charge of this luggage—none of the officials of the station were on duty at the time—but I was told by my guide that all I had to do was to have my portmanteau and bags and rugs put down in the first vacant spot I could find, and to leave them there till my return. I demurred somewhat to this proposal, but I was assured that the things were as safe as if they were under lock and key; that luggage was always left in this way; that nothing was ever lost; and that if the natives, who would make much more outcry about losing half a franc than I should about losing a napoleon, were content to leave their own luggage unguarded and unprotected, I surely might do the same. I followed the advice, and had no reason to regret having done so.

Of the town of Bourgas itself there is little to be said that I have not said already of Rustschuk and of Varna. It has less of a distinctive character than either of the two above-named towns, though it has gone quite as fast ahead, if not faster. It possesses the same indications of progress that I have noticed elsewhere. New, broad, well-paved streets have been driven through the old city. There are fine public buildings and institutions. There are any number of handsome private dwelling-houses and all the ordinary signs of advancing civilization. The town is prettily situated, and may in time become a very popular and very prosperous seaport. In the belief that such a contingency is certain to occur, the value of what the Yankees call "corner lots" in the town has increased very rapidly here of late, just as it has done at Varna.

CHAPTER XXIX.

PHILIPPOPOLIS.

In the midst of the vast fertile plain which stretches between the Balkans to the north and the Rhodope Mountains to the south, there rise up suddenly some half-dozen rocky crags along the banks of the river Maritza. By what freak of nature these isolated rocks emerged ages ago from the plain, or whether they are simply the summits of submerged mountains, I am not geologist enough even to surmise. But it is intelligible to any one why, in bygone days, the ground between these steep, turret-like hills should have been chosen as the site of a city. From the summits of any one of them you can scour the plain in every direction for miles and miles away. No enemy could advance against Philippopolis without his approach being discovered from the watch-towers on these hill-tops hours before his arrival. Their sides are even now so precipitous, their ascent so steep, that it must have been easy to render them almost impregnable as fortresses in the days of bows and arrows and battering-rams, and even of the Macedonian phalanx. Tradition says that Philip the Great of Macedon was the original founder of the city ; and in as far as I can see, if there is no particular evidence that he was, there is even less reason why he should not

have been. In any case, Philippopolis is a very ancient city ; and I have little doubt that antiquarians might find here traces of the various old-world dominions, which held sway in Eastern Europe long before Sclavs and Turks were ever heard of. The Turks, however, had a marvellous facility for destroying the relics of antiquity ; and here, as in all other parts of Bulgaria, I can see few traces of any building dating back much, if at all, beyond the last century. Fires, too, are such incidents of daily life in these old Turkish towns, with their narrow, winding streets, and their wooden houses overhanging and overlapping each other at every angle, that the wonder is, not that the old buildings are not of greater age, but that they should have survived so long.

The principal quarter of the town nestles between two crags, which rise above the streets very much as the Pizzo Falcone quarter at Naples rises above the Strada di Chiaja. From this centre the town has stretched out in all directions into the plain, and has even extended beyond the river. Philippopolis has more of an Oriental look than any city I have ever seen in Bulgaria. Lying as it does some 1500 to 2000 feet below Sofia, it enjoys a much milder, though I am told a far less healthy climate. Owing probably to the difference of temperature, one notices a good deal here of the outdoor life of the south, a thing which is unknown in the Capital. In the poorer streets, the shops are mostly open to the air ; traders stitch cross-legged on their boards, barbers shave their customers, and the baker kneads his loaves *coram populo*. Here, also, the mosques are more numerous than the churches. On the top of one of the hills I counted some five and twenty minarets, and I have no doubt there were others which lay out of

my range of vision; and from all of these the call to prayer is made by the muezzin, both at sunrise and sunset. You do not, however, see nearly so much in Philippopolis of the Turkish dress and garb as you do round about Rustschuk. The Mahommedans of Philippopolis keep very much to themselves. Even now, they number close upon 7000, and though their community is being constantly diminished every year by the departure of about one-tenth of the whole body, the void thus caused is made good to some extent by the incourse of Tomak villagers from the country districts into the town.

The last of the many battles which Philippopolis has witnessed in the course of its long and varied fortunes, was one fought by the Turks against the Russians at the close of the late war. It was just outside the town that the Turks, who had then been driven out of Plevna and Shipka, made their last stand. Baker Pasha had been summoned in haste to Constantinople to assist in the defence of the Capital against the expected attack of the victorious Russian armies. The retreating Turkish troops, ill armed, ill commanded, and demoralized by defeat, turned to bay at Philippopolis with a forlorn hope of checking the advance of the Russians. On the top of a hill close by the city there stands a stone slab recording the fact that on this spot General Gourkoff had his head-quarters, while he directed the movements of his troops in the plain below. The battle was not long. The Turks, finding themselves out-numbered and out-manœuvred, lost heart and fled towards the Rhodope, leaving their guns behind them. With this defeat the war came to an end, and if it had not been for the arrival of the English fleet in the Sea of Marmora, the road to Constantinople would have lain

open to the Russians, and in all likelihood Philippopolis would to-day have been the prefecture of a Russian province.

As things turned out, Philippopolis enjoyed a brief period of independent existence as the Capital of Eastern Roumelia. Had it not been for the modifications introduced into the Treaty of San Stefano at the Conference of Berlin, the two Bulgarian provinces would have been converted at once into one united State, of which the city of Philip the Great would have been the natural metropolis. But the fates, as represented by the Western Powers, willed it otherwise; and when, six years later, Eastern Roumelia threw off the restrictions imposed upon her by the Treaty of Berlin, and proclaimed her incorporation with Bulgaria, Sofia had already been made the seat of government. Though I think that the incident which deprived Philippopolis of her claim to be the capital of Bulgaria is not matter for regret, there can be no question that the Roumeliote city was in many respects better fitted than Sofia to be the metropolis of the Principality. It stands in a singularly central position. It has considerable historical and architectural pretensions. It is surrounded by hills not less beautiful than those which encircle Sofia. It is situated on the banks of a broad river, and it is the centre of one of the most fertile districts in the whole country. However, Philippopolis seems fairly well satisfied with things as they are, though a certain amount of jealousy of Sofia is entertained by its inhabitants, and there is, in consequence, a tendency on the part of its inhabitants to take an unfavourable view of the action of the Sofiote Government. There is a powerful Anti-Stambouloff party here, which has papers of its

own, and which is expected to influence the elections in this part of Bulgaria.

Even in the Turkish days, Philippopolis was a prosperous city, with—for Bulgaria—an unusual proportion of well-to-do citizens. There are a considerable number of roomy, well-built dwellings in the older parts of the town, which clearly date from periods long anterior to the War of Liberation. There are also all the usual signs of recent material progress. The boulevard leading from the station to the town is lined on either side by handsome detached villas of the ordinary neo-Bulgarian order. In the streets old houses are being pulled down everywhere to make room for lofty, many-storied dwellings. The shops are the best, and contain the most varied assortments of goods, of any I have seen in Bulgaria. There is a fine public garden, laid out by the municipality on the site of an old Mahommedan cemetery in the heart of the town, the removal of which was one of the first corporate acts of the city after it had obtained its independence. The public schools, of which I have written elsewhere, are, as buildings, equal or superior to any I have ever seen in England. The Free Public Library is an institution of which any Western city might well be proud. It is located in the building which was designed for the National Assembly of Eastern Roumelia. It was not, however, finished till just after the deposition of the Turkish Governor and the consequent annexation of the province to Bulgaria. There was no further necessity for a Parliament House in Philippopolis, and the municipality, with great good sense, agreed to convert the building into a public library. The building consists of a plain, large hall, with a wooden gallery running round it, and with

bookselves reaching up to the roof. On the railing in front of the gallery, there are portraits of the Prince and Princess, and of the Princess Clementine, who have all been large benefactors to the library. There are portraits also of M. Stambouloff, of some of the leaders of the Roumeliote Revolution, and also of one or more of the traditional heroes of Bulgaria in the days of its legendary grandeur. In the centre of the hall there stands an oblong table covered with various magazines and newspapers, amidst which I noticed the *Nineteenth Century*, the *Illustrated London News*, and the *Daily Graphic*. The books, judging from my inspection of the shelves, were mainly standard works treating of historical, social, or scientific subjects. For instance, amidst some 4000 English volumes, I caught sight of Macaulay's "History of England," "A Concordance to Shakespeare," John Stuart Mill's works on Political Economy, Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," Grote's "History of Greece," and Horace Walpole's "Correspondence." Fiction seemed to me very sparely represented, perhaps because the Bulgarians have hardly any literature of their own, and what little they have does not run in the way of novel-writing. I should doubt, too, fiction being much in demand in a country where education is as yet pretty well confined to a class who, in as far as they study literature at all, do so mostly with a view to the tangible advantages they hope to derive from their studies as a means of obtaining official employment. The love of letters for letters' sake belongs to a more advanced stage of intellectual development than the Bulgars have yet attained. Still, there was evidence that the library was largely frequented; admission was absolutely free, but every visitor is bound to sign his name in a book upon

entry. During the last month the attendance, I noticed, averaged from 130 to 150 a day—a very fair average for a town of some 35,000 inhabitants, where almost everybody is engaged in agriculture or trade, and where the proportion of people who can afford leisure time for reading during business hours must be extremely limited. The library is open from eight to twelve in the morning, and from two to eight in the afternoon, and as the Early Closing Movement is utterly unknown in Bulgaria, there can be little opportunity during these hours for any busy person to spend much time reading in the library. All townspeople are permitted to borrow books from the library on making a small deposit; and I am assured by the librarian that delays or defaults in returning the books borrowed are of very rare occurrence. The Sobranje votes about £400 yearly for the purchase of books; but, with this exception, the whole expenses of the institution are defrayed by the municipality.

I drove out one afternoon during my stay at Philippopolis to visit the new waterworks, which form the chief improvement that the city has yet carried out. There was till recently a great deal of fever here, which was attributed to the bad quality of the water supply. The water of the Maritza is supposed to be polluted by the town sewage, which percolates into the river. Moreover, as a great part of the city is built on the rocky heights of which I have spoken, water from the Maritza had to be brought up in buckets. In order to obviate these defects, the town authorities decided, on the advice of an eminent Belgian firm of hydraulic engineers, to obtain their water from a mountain stream in the Rhodope Hills, at a distance of some ten miles from the city; the stream to be

tapped at an elevation somewhat above the highest point of the hills of Philippopolis. The site of the outtake is in a singularly picturesque mountain gorge. The water, after being diverted from the stream, passes through a number of tanks, where it is carefully filtered, and is then conveyed to Philippopolis by iron culverts. The scheme has proved a complete success as a means of supplying the town with a practically unlimited quantity of singularly fresh and clear water. There has been of late a very marked improvement in the healthiness of the city, though whether this improvement is *post hoc* or *propter hoc* I have no means of saying.

I refer to this incident because it seems to me an illustration of the good sense which, on the whole, characterizes the local administration of the country. No charge is brought more frequently against Bulgaria by people who, for one cause or another, are dissatisfied with the present order of things, than the assertion that, under the new *régime*, the local indebtedness of the municipalities has assumed serious and alarming proportions. Philippopolis is often cited as an example of this alleged extravagance. But if the information given me by persons who have no interest in the matter is reliable, the charge in this instance has very little foundation. Since the liberation of Eastern Roumelia Philippopolis has incurred a debt of £120,000, which, in the main, was borrowed from the National Bank of Bulgaria at a charge, for interest and sinking fund, of about 10 per cent. The revenue of the town, which is chiefly derived from the octroi duties, is about £20,000; and, with the rapid growth of the population, this revenue is steadily on the increase. The interest on the city loan absorbs more than three-fifths of the

municipality's annual income, and it is admittedly hard pressed to meet the normal expenditure out of the balance of some £8000. At times the municipality has been short of money to meet current expenses. The loan, however, has been spent to advantage. The waterworks alone cost £80,000, and the balance of the loan was employed in the construction and equipment of the public schools, the town library, and the municipal offices. I should think it extremely probable that these various improvements may have put money into the pockets of the leading personages in the city in addition to any general benefit they may have derived from them as members of the community. As I have said before, the standard of public duty is not as high in Bulgaria as it is with us. Still, I can see no evidence whatever that, even making allowance for a certain amount of individual jobbery, the city did not get full value for its money. The great bulk of the town debt has been incurred in undertakings which are likely to prove remunerative in the end, and which are important, if not essential, to the welfare of the city. What is true of Philippopolis is true, I gather, as a rule, of the other municipalities. There may have been mistakes, needless outlay, and a certain amount of leakage ; but, in the main, the money borrowed has been well spent. The private dwellings which have sprung up in the new quarters have, in the great majority of instances, been built by their owners, not by the municipalities, and so far the local authorities have erred rather in the way of postponing necessary improvements out of motives of economy than of carrying them out regardless of cost. The indebtedness of the towns is a matter deserving strict attention, but up to the present it does not furnish cause for serious alarm.

In many respects Philippopolis seems to me the brightest and most cheerful of any Bulgarian city I have visited. Still, this brightness is negative rather than positive. In Philippopolis, as elsewhere, there is hardly any amusement provided for the public. There is no display of either wealth or luxury. There are no places of entertainment, and by nine o'clock at night the city is quiet, the streets are well-nigh deserted, and the cafés, which are even smaller and shabbier than those of Sofia, are left empty. An English country town after nightfall is a scene of wild dissipation compared with the Roumeliote capital.

NEIGHBOURS OF THE PEASANT STATE.

CHAPTER XXX.

ROUMANIA AND SERVIA.

THE Principality may be said, roughly speaking, to be bounded on the north by Roumania, on the west by Servia, and on the south and east by Turkey. Of Bulgaria's relations to Turkey I have already spoken. With regard to the two former States, there is not much that absolutely requires saying in order to convey a fair impression of their influence upon Bulgaria. I was constantly struck by the very little interest that either Roumanian or Servian politics seemed to create in Sofia. The affairs of London, Paris, Vienna, and Berlin attracted far more attention in the Bulgarian Capital than those of Belgrade or Bucharest. The truth is that, though the three States of Bulgaria, Servia, and Roumania lie very near at hand, they are greatly isolated from each other. This isolation is due partly to difference of character, partly to the difficulties of locomotion.

I should have been sorry to miss seeing something of the Rouman and Servian capitals, as these States have very much in common with Bulgaria in respect of their

external conditions. Their internal conditions, however, are fundamentally different ; and I was anxious to note for myself how far this difference made itself manifest in their respective Capitals, holding as I do that the Capital of a country is always more or less the embodied personification of its status, traditions, and aspirations. The circumstances under which the two States of Bulgaria and Roumania recovered their independence were very nearly identical. Within the memory of men still in the prime of life, Roumania, equally with Bulgaria, formed part and parcel of the Ottoman Empire. Anti-Turkish risings took place in what were then called the Danubian Principalities ; the risings were followed by reprisals ; the European Powers, at the instance of Russia, intervened for the protection of the Roumans ; and a sort of qualified autonomy was conferred upon the Turkish provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia, which now form the Roumanian kingdom. The Powers, however, who in those days were hostile to Russia—I am now speaking of the era which succeeded the Crimean War, the era when European statesmen still believed in the possible regeneration of Turkey in Europe—attached special importance to limiting this autonomy so as to hinder the provinces of the Ottoman Empire lying north of the Danube, which were then deemed certain to be mere outposts of Russia, from endangering the safety of the Ottoman Empire. Any one who takes the trouble to search through the well-nigh forgotten records of this bygone era, so near if measured by time, so far away if measured by events, will find that at this period all the efforts of Western diplomacy were exerted to preclude the possibility of the two Danubian provinces being united into one common State. By the Treaty which secured

their autonomy, it was provided that Moldavia and Wallachia, while they had the right, subject to the sanction of the Sultan, to nominate their own Hospodars, were to remain separate communities, ruled over by different Hospodars. This arrangement was deemed at the time a signal achievement of British diplomacy under Lord Palmerston, in the same way as the severance of Bulgaria from Eastern Roumelia was deemed a brilliant achievement of British statesmanship on the part of Lord Beaconsfield at the Congress of Berlin. Both achievements proved equally ineffectual and equally short-lived. There is no need here to go into the confused and obscure narrative of the rivalry between the Ghikas and the Stourdzas. It is enough to say that, when the Hospodarship of one of the two provinces became vacant by the deposition of its ruler, the Hospodar of the sister-province was forthwith elected to his place by popular acclamation. Once more diplomacy, ignoring the plain, hard fact that there is no half-way house between autonomy and independence, made vain efforts to protect the titular sovereignty of Turkey over Bulgaria. A compromise was devised, in virtue of which the native Hospodar gave in his resignation, while Moldavia and Wallachia were transformed into the Principality of Roumania, under the rule of a foreign Prince, the Prince in question being a cadet of the Hohenzollern family. It was, I believe, on the occasion of the selection of Prince Charles of Hohenzollern that the great Chancellor delivered his famous remark, that, "after all, the mere fact of having once been a reigning sovereign will always furnish a pleasant recollection to your Highness."

So far the history of the liberation of Roumania and

Bulgaria runs on almost exactly parallel lines. It cannot be doubted that before very long Bulgaria will follow the example of Roumania, and obtain titular as well as practical autonomy. Given similar conditions in the two countries, one might have anticipated similar results being forthcoming. In one respect this anticipation has been fully realized. Both Roumania and Bulgaria, as soon as they became independent, threw off the tutelage of Russia, and, instead of forming outposts of Muscovite aggression against Turkey, became obstacles to the further advance of Russia towards the Bosphorus. Both Roumania and Bulgaria have a distinct nationality of their own; they both attach the utmost value to their national independence, and they both have learnt by experience to look upon Russia, not on Turkey, as the Power by whom that independence is threatened in the near future. Thus, a community of political interests has grown up between the two States, which may possibly lead to an offensive and defensive alliance between the two in the event of a new Russo-Turkish War.

In all other respects the two countries, in as far as one can judge from the aspect of their two Capitals, are the very antipodes of each other. In Sofia everything is sober, sombre, simple, if not sordid, and yet with a certain dignity of its own. In Bucharest everything is bright, brilliant, luxurious, and lavish, yet bearing a certain aspect of artificial varnish. If I had come to Bucharest from any other European Capital than that of Bulgaria, I should not, perhaps, have been equally impressed with its air of wealth and luxury. As it happened, I received my first impression of the Rouman metropolis under circumstances calculated to heighten the vividness of the contrasts

between the two cities. Up to the day when I started from Sofia the winter was still in full force. The mountains surrounding the town were covered with snow; scarcely a night had passed without there being frost in the early morning; the winds cut like knives; the country-side was as bare and bleak as it was in the depth of winter; the rooms were all heated with stoves; out-of-doors the air was wintry. But, on the very day after I had quitted Sofia, and had passed the Hungarian frontier into Roumania, I found myself in a different atmosphere, physical as well as moral. The long journey through Roumania was made in hot, pleasant sunshine. Windows had to be opened, rugs and coats thrown aside; everywhere, and on all sides, there was a grateful feeling of the coming summer-time. The bushes were green; the lilacs and the almond trees were in full blossom; and at midnight, when I entered Bucharest, it was warmer and brighter than it had been at Sofia, when I left the Bulgarian capital at noon two days before. Again, too, to a stranger from the West it is a personal satisfaction to get back into a country where you can form, by the use of your own eyes, a clear notion of what is going on around you. In Bucharest the Greek letters have disappeared, and any traveller acquainted with Latin or French, or, still more, with Italian, can easily form a very fair impression of what is portended by the words he sees inscribed on shop-fronts, play-bills, and every other kind of mural advertisements. No great knowledge, for instance, of Latin tongues is required to indicate to you at the railway stations that *barbati* means "men;" *femei* means "women;" or that *esita* is analogous to "exit."

Still, I fancy that even if these conditions had been

reversed, if I had left Sofia in the dog-days to find Bucharest immersed in snow, if I had been as much at fault to understand Roumanian as I was to comprehend Bulgarian, I should have been marvellously impressed by the contrast between the two cities. They are both newly built; they are both stucco-fronted; they are both examples of that peculiar school of nondescript architecture which prevails throughout Western Europe, and of which modern Rome is, perhaps, the highest type, and Sofia, perhaps, the lowest. They have this also in common, that their construction is still incomplete, and that ever and anon there crop up in their midst open spots and bare spaces, where the old whitewashed walls and the red-tiled roofs of the Turkish cottages are still to be seen.

Otherwise, everything is unlike in the streets of Bucharest and Sofia. It is the fashion of the Belgians to describe Brussels as a little Paris; with even greater justice the Roumans might describe Bucharest as a little Brussels. The town is a very large one in size as compared with Sofia, though, owing to the scattered way in which it has been built, it probably covers an area of ground out of proportion to the amount of its population. Bucharest, I may say briefly, has all the outward look and semblance of a wealthy Western city. The houses are tall, built side by side, and many-storied. The streets are crowded from early morning with foot-passengers and carriages. The shops are handsome, with large plate-glass windows, filled with all the articles which furnish the stock-in-trade of Vanity Fair in the New World as in the Old. The hotels are of the regular modern caravanserai order, which causes them to resemble each

other so closely throughout the world, that if you could be transported into any one of them in a state of unconsciousness you would not know on waking, from any indication inside the rooms, whether you were in San Francisco, or London, or Vienna. In lieu of the small, shabby beer-cellars, where entertainment is alone provided at Sofia, you have any number of gorgeous cafés and restaurants, all equipped after the orthodox Parisian model, and all, if you can judge from the scale of charges, depending upon the custom of well-to-do and luxurious frequenters. There are several theatres in the town, where performances are given by French and German and Italian as well as native companies. There are any number of handsome villas in the suburbs which might have been transported bodily from the Palmen Garten quarter of Frankfort. Life, animation, bustle prevail all day and all night about the place. The sound of carriages, tramway-cars, and omnibuses never seems to cease; news-boys are perpetually perambulating the streets and hawking fresh editions of the local papers. Everywhere you see the traces of an opulent, pleasure-seeking community. It is not only material comfort which is to be found here in plenty—there are everywhere indications of a large-reading public, such as is utterly unknown in Bulgarian towns. Any number of newspapers are hawked about the streets. Two French papers are published here daily—one violently Governmental, the other equally violent in support of the Opposition. Illustrated papers, caricatures of public men, pamphlets, broadsheets, and all the usual concomitants of an active political life, are to be found here. The bookshops are plentiful, and well provided with native and foreign literature. At the cafés you find the leading

German, French, and English papers. This is all so different from Sofia, where there is hardly a bookstall in the town, and where the beggarly rows of books exposed for sale are all in Bulgarian, and are chiefly manuals of agriculture or some other technical science.

I confess, however, that what impressed me most, coming as I did fresh from endless strolls along the Constantinople Road, the one promenade of Sofia, where we reckoned it a gala-day if we met half a dozen tumble-down hack carriages and a couple of officers on horseback, was the spectacle of the Chaussea, the *Bois de Boulogne* of Bucharest. My first visit to it was on a Sunday, and as that Sunday happened to be the first really hot day of the spring, all Bucharest seemed to be out-of-doors, and all the world and his wife, clad in their best, were bent towards the Chaussea. There was such a run on the endless rows of well-appointed, two-horse victorias, which ply for hire in the streets of Bucharest, that the porter of my hotel informed me it would be impossible to find a carriage till the hour of the promenade was over. However, I found one by chance; and as I rode rapidly along the smooth, well-paved streets, I could not avoid the reflection that, in respect of public carriage accommodation, Bucharest was a long way ahead both of London and Paris, not to mention Sofia. For little more than eighteen-pence an hour I was provided with a clean, well-cushioned, easy-going carriage, which was drawn by two sleek, well-groomed horses, and driven by a coachman, who, externally at any rate, was clean and spick and span. It is from the West, not from the North, that Roumania has drawn her civilization. Throughout the streets you look in vain for any outward token of the near proximity of Russia, with

the exception that the old Greek Calendar is still in use, and that the churches belong to the Greek, not to the Latin rite. The one thing which I noticed savouring markedly of Russian ideas was the costume of the coachmen, alike in private and public carriages. At Bucharest as at St. Petersburg the cabmen wear the loose black velvet coat, which comes down to the heels and is bound round the waist with a bright red silk sash. Their heads are covered with sheepskin kaftans. As in Russia, they drive their team holding one rein in each hand, not both reins in one hand; and are seated upon a small, leather box-seat with raised sides, enclosing a space which fashion requires they should fill exactly. In most cases the natural dimensions of the seat and sitter do not correspond with each other, and art is called in to supply the deficiency of nature. The result is that the great majority of Roumanian drivers are provided with the most obvious dress-improvers, by the aid of which their seats are filled to overflowing. This custom, which is derived from Russia, looks odd to Western eyes, but I do not know that it is more absurd than any other freak of fashion.

The Chaussea is an avenue of acacias, with a plantation of young trees on either side, which, when the leaves are fully out, must form a fair copy on a smaller scale of the Prater at Vienna. Along the roads there were endless restaurants and cafés, all of which seemed to be doing a good business. But the real sight of the Chaussea consisted in the almost unbroken procession of carriages. I tried to count the private carriages, but soon lost my reckoning, as, apart from the great number of vehicles of all kinds, many of the private public victorias were so well appointed that, unless you caught sight of the numbers on

their lamps, it was impossible to distinguish those that plied for hire from those which were owned by private individuals. The roadway was broad enough for some half-dozen carriages to drive abreast, but the throng was so dense that we had constantly to stop in traversing a distance of a full mile in length, while our carriage was never able to proceed at more than a foot's pace. I do not know that I have ever seen a finer average collection of horseflesh than that which was displayed on the Chaussea promenade. The inmates of the carriages were dressed up to the height of the occasion. Men and women—I am speaking now of the occupants of the carriages—were attired after the Western fashion; the former in faultless English day dress, the latter in Parisian *toilettes de sortie.* At Sofia a tall hat is a rarity; here it is the well-nigh universal head-gear, even for clerks and shopmen. It is no great compliment to the Rouman ladies to say that they are handsomer than their Bulgarian sisters. The sallow type of beauty, half Latin, half Levantine, which prevails here, is not one appealing greatly to my personal admiration. But this I must say for the ladies of Roumania, that they are women and not, as for the most part in Bulgaria, females only. It was like coming back to civilized life to see once more woman after woman dressed and got up so as to please the eye, and presenting something, at any rate to the male gaze, which induced you to look again. Moreover, so long as human nature remains what it is, and so long also as you have not got to pay for the spectacle, I know of no sight more pleasing to the masculine mind than that of an endless vista of feminine costumes, which a man sees to be gorgeous and knows to be costly.

Altogether, my brief sojourn in Bucharest gave me a very pleasant impression of the Rouman Capital. If I were compelled to choose whether I would reside at Sofia or Bucharest, I might be distracted between my respect for moral qualities and my personal taste for material comfort. But, looking at the question from an altruistic point of view, I am convinced the social development of Bulgaria, as typified by Sofia, is sounder and more promising for the future than that of Roumania, as personified by Bucharest. The Roumanians have succeeded in adding another to the Capitals of modern Europe, displaying all the luxury, all the extravagance, all the passion for enjoyment, all the inequalities of wealth, and all the consequent misery, discontent, and vice which form the necessary concomitants of our *fin de siècle* civilization. As yet, the Bulgarians have only created at Sofia a city fitted to be the centre of a peasant State. For themselves—whatever they may have done for strangers—they have chosen the better part.

How it came to pass that two States, situated so close to each other as Bulgaria and Roumania, coming into existence under such analogous conditions, and having so much in common, should have developed up to now in such different directions, is a question concerning which I had not time or opportunity to arrive at any definite conclusion. Probably the main cause is the fundamental difference of race and character between the two nations. Whether the Roumans are or are not, as they boast, the lineal descendants of the old Romans, they are undoubtedly a race of Latin origin and Latin tongue, which, by some strange freak of history, has managed to survive in this No Man's Land of Eastern Europe. For good or bad the

Rouman is a Latin, just as the Magyar is a Tartar and the Serb is a Sclav. There are Rouman-speaking races, not only on the banks of the Danube, but in Austria, in Turkey, and in Russia; and the patriots of Bucharest do not conceal their ambition of some day or other uniting all the branches of the Rouman nationality into one State and then rendering that State the leading member of some confederation of South-Eastern Europe.

A second reason, I fancy, why Roumania and Bulgaria have developed in such different fashions lies in the entire difference, from an economic point of view, of their respective points of departure. Bulgaria, as my object throughout these pages has been to show, started on her independent career as a community of peasant farmers, without any aristocracy, any large landed proprietary, or any wealthy mercantile and professional classes. Roumania, on the other hand, was the country of the Boyards, of historic families, of great landowners, and of vast estates, which were tilled by peasant labourers, almost if not altogether in a state of serfdom. Then, too, the country, even if its soil was not richer than that of Bulgaria, lay close at hand to the markets of Hungary and Russia, and found a ready sale for its rich agricultural produce. The consequence was that both trade and agriculture were developed at a far earlier period in the Danubian principalities than was the case in Bulgaria. Thus, at the epochs of their respective enfranchisements, the two States started independent life on completely different terms. The one had a large, wealthy class, composed of great landowners and well-to-do merchants, and side by side of them a numerous proletariate, who had little or nothing of their own beyond the wages they

earned in the services of their masters and landlords. The other had a completely homogeneous population, composed almost exclusively of small, independent peasant proprietors. Add to this, that the former were a people of the plains, belonging to an excitable, pleasure-loving race, while the latter were a people of the mountains, belonging to a frugal, stolid, self-contained nationality. Given these conditions, there is perhaps no cause for wonder that their internal development should have proceeded in the contrary directions, symbolized by the respective aspects of Bucharest and Sofia. My knowledge of Roumania is too limited and too superficial to enable me to speak with any confidence as to the correctness of my deductions. I can only give, for what it is worth, the impression left upon my mind that, in Roumania, there is a good deal which is hollow and artificial in the signs of progress you witness on every side. On the other hand, whatever progress there is in Bulgaria—and in many respects this progress is small in comparison with that of Roumania—is solid, stable, and enduring. In fact, to put the matter plainly, there is a sort of gilt-and-gingerbread look about Bucharest which could hardly fail to impress even a passing visitor. This impression is confirmed by what he hears on every side from foreign residents in the city, who cannot be accused of being unfriendly to the cause of Roumanian independence. While doing justice to the great quickness and natural intelligence of the Roumanians, to their power of expression, and their marvellous rapidity of comprehension, your informants assure you at the same time that the people, from the highest class to the lowest, are wanting in the qualities which are required to make a nation. Whether the

Roumanians are morally more corrupt and depraved than their neighbours south of the Danube, I have no means of judging for myself; but a very cursory inspection is sufficient to show that physically they are a far less robust, stalwart, and healthy race. Certain classes of maladies flourish so vigorously on Roumanian soil, and attain such proportions, that whole villages have frequently to be surrounded by a cordon of troops, with orders not to allow anybody to leave the village and disseminate the malady abroad until the doctors, who are sent with the troops, can give the infected villages a comparatively clean bill of health. Happily for Roumania, the public opinion of the community approves of very drastic measures of dealing with disease, and has no sympathy with any of the sentimental objections which, in our own country, are put forward by the Anti-Vaccination League.

Between Servia and Bulgaria the outward differences are far less striking than those which distinguish Bulgaria from Roumania. Indeed, the physical and moral conditions of the two first-named countries are very much the same. They are both Sclav States, speaking the same language. There are certain differences of accent and pronunciation between the two, certain words which are peculiar to each country. But these differences are not greater, I fancy, than those which exist between the dialects of Yorkshire and Somersetshire, and are certainly not great enough to hinder the inhabitants of either State from understanding the speech of the other. Anybody who knows Russian can make out what is said to him, alike in Servian and Bulgarian, though I am told that Sclavs and Bulgars find it more difficult to understand Russian when spoken to them. This may probably be explained by the

fact of their comparative want of education. The written language of the three countries is almost identical. Again, Servia and Bulgaria are adjacent lands, divided, not by broad rivers or by mountain ranges, but, in the main, by a purely geographical frontier. Were it not for the Custom-houses between the two States, a stranger would hardly know when he had passed from one into the other. Their religion is identical, and they are both in theory, whatever they may be in practice, devout adherents of the Eastern Church. The two Sclav States of the Balkan Peninsula have also this in common, that for centuries they remained subject to Turkish rule, that they both achieved their independence recently, and that they both owe their final emancipation to the power of Russia. Their economical conditions are also of much the same order. Servia, equally with Bulgaria, is a peasant State in which there are neither millionaires nor paupers, no privileged classes, and no important industry other than that of agriculture. But in spite of all these resemblances the two countries present many points of difference, noticeable even by a passing stranger. In Bulgaria, one sees everywhere signs of progress; and in Servia one sees signs of decay. The Serb peasants have not the cheerful look of the Bulgarians; the Serb villages have not the same air of plain, rough comfort. The thrift and the stolid soberness of the Bulgarian are not qualities which characterize the western Sclavs. The latter are fond of calling themselves the French of Eastern Europe; but their chief resemblance to the French consists in their being more loquacious, more excitable, and more demonstrative than their neighbours. Unfavourable critics of the policy pursued by Bulgaria under the present *régime* are fond of saying that Servia

ought to be an object lesson to Bulgaria, as showing the dangers inherent in the concession of gratuitous education and of manhood franchise to a population, the great majority of whom could neither read nor write at the period when political power was placed in their hands. The Serbs are keen politicians and great newspaper readers. The Bulgarians, on the other hand, are still wrapped up in their home interests, and care very little about general politics.

Between Serbs and Bulgars there is a sort of personal antipathy not easily to be accounted for ; and in weighing the value of the comments they pass upon each other, you must make allowance for the exaggeration inseparable from racial prejudices. Quite apart from the animosity engendered by the late war, there are many causes of dissension between the two countries. The question whether the Sclavs in the non-liberated provinces of Turkey in Europe are by rights Bulgars or Serbs is an issue which excites the keenest controversy between the twin Balkan States. Both nations are extravagantly proud of their traditional, I might almost say their mythical, grandeur in bygone days ; and both look on the other as interlopers, if not impostors. My own opinion is, that though the Servians have perhaps better claims to represent the Sclav nationality in the past, the Bulgarians have a better claim to represent it in the future. Certainly, if the two countries are to be judged by their Capitals, Bulgaria stands on a higher level than Servia. Belgrade has many advantages of position and tradition to which Sofia can make no pretension. Lying as it does at the junction of the Danube and the Save, Belgrade might be made a far finer city than Sofia is ever likely to become. Moreover,

apart from the beauty of its site, standing as it does on a ridge between the two rivers, the city has historical associations of which the Bulgarian Capital is totally devoid. Belgrade, with its scores of sieges, has a past of which her inhabitants are justly proud ; while Sofia owes her pre-eminence simply and solely to the fact that, within the last twenty years, the Russians selected her as the metropolis of the province which they had just snatched from Turkey, and which they intended to make their own. Servia, again, is indebted for her emancipation to a native rising under a native leader, while Bulgaria was set free by foreign intervention. Notwithstanding all this, Belgrade has much more of the look of an Oriental city than most of the Bulgarian towns. The small, detached villas which line the chief streets of Sofia are almost unknown in Belgrade. There were few signs of building anywhere. The streets are ill paved, everything about the town seems untidy and unprosperous. The shops are not so good as those of the principal towns in Bulgaria. There are tram-lines in the main street traversed by the commonest open-air cars I have ever seen anywhere. The electric light has forced its way here and there into the city, but the ordinary lighting is not equal to that of Sofia. Indeed, in all substantial respects, Sofia is a far more livable place than its rival, the Sclav metropolis. In both towns there is an almost equally complete absence of private carriages and well-dressed people. They are both thoroughly provincial in their aspect, and their provincialism is not even of a high order. I cannot say that personally I have any desire to end my days as a denizen of Sofia. But if the Fates so willed it, I should not regard my lot as being one-half so

intolerable as it would appear to me if I were doomed to live and die in Belgrade. The latter place, however, has the advantage of a pretty boulevard sort of street lined with trees, to which Sofia possesses no counterpart. It is on this boulevard that the residences of the Foreign Ministers, the abodes of a few well-to-do foreign merchants, and the Royal Palace are situated. Except for the presence of a sentry before the entrance, there is little to distinguish the King's palace from any other house in the boulevard. It stands close to the road, has no flag floating over its roof, no guard-house in front, none of the outward signs by the employment of which Prince Ferdinand has contrived to give a certain semblance of royalty to his residence in the Alexander Square of Sofia. It so happened that while in Belgrade, I passed one evening in front of the palace on my way to dinner. My attention was called to the building by the fact that on the footwalk opposite the palace, there was collected a crowd of some twenty people. The presence of a score of persons standing together in the public streets constitutes a demonstration in towns so tranquil under ordinary circumstances as Belgrade or Sofia. It was obvious that these people were looking at something which attracted their attention. I looked up, and on the balcony of the palace I saw a group of two men in evening-dress. One, who was almost a boy, was seated in an American rocking-chair, and was swinging his legs up and down. The second, a short, stout man, kept walking backwards and forwards along the balcony in much the same way as a lion paces for hours from one end of its cage to another. I made inquiries of a passer-by, and learnt, as I had expected from the presence

of the crowd, that the lad in the chair was Alexander, King of Servia, and that his companion was his father, the ex-King Milan. On most evenings when the weather is warm, the two royalties of Servia are, so to speak, on view upon their balcony during the half-hour that precedes their dinner. Pomp and state of any kind are far less observed in the Court of Belgrade than they are in that of Sofia, and on this account the Servian Court is probably more popular with its own people. It should, however, be remembered that Prince Milan and his son are Servians by birth and breeding, while the dynasty of Bulgaria is, so far, entirely foreign. It would, in consequence, be impossible that Prince Ferdinand should acquire the sort of personal, hail-fellow-well-met popularity amongst his people which the Servians still entertain towards the ex-King in spite of all his failings, and which has, to some extent, descended to his son. I am inclined, however, to doubt whether if Milan had been Prince of Bulgaria, its people would ever have pardoned his reckless extravagance, his utter lack of principle, and the scandals of his private life. Whatever their defects may be, the Bulgarian peasants have a sense of self-respect in which the Servians seem to be deficient.

Thus the little I was able to see of Servia, as represented by Belgrade, and of Roumania, as represented by Bucharest, confirmed me in the belief that if ever there should be a confederation of the Balkan Peninsula, the hegemony in such a confederation must, by the law of the survival of the fittest, belong to the State which, under Prince Alexander, conquered at Slievnitza.

CHAPTER XXXI.

POSTSCRIPT.

THE preceding pages were all written before the Ministerial crisis at Sofia, which occurred immediately after the termination of my visit, and which ended in the resignation of M. Stambouloff, and the accession to office of M. Stoiloff. I think it will be apparent to any one who has taken the trouble of reading what I have said as to the relations between the Prince and his great Minister, that this contingency was not unforeseen by me, though I frankly admit I did not regard it as being so close at hand. In making this assertion, I lay no claim to any particular foresight, as it had long been obvious to any one at all behind the scenes of Sofiote political life that the position of the Stambouloff Ministry was one of unstable equilibrium. The causes of this instability are alluded to in various parts of the foregoing chapters. It may perhaps be well to recapitulate them. In my opinion the Stambouloff Ministry had been losing ground of late, owing to four causes:—

The increase of taxation necessitated by the policy of internal development (of which M. Stambouloff was the chief representative) had created considerable discontent among the peasantry.

The Savoff scandal, whatever the truth may have been,

had created an unfavourable impression against the Ministry in the minds of a community whose code of morality is based mainly on the Turkish notion that any violation of the harem is the gravest of all social offences.

The long-standing antagonism between the Prince and the Prime Minister had passed from a chronic into an acute stage.

The late Ministry had been so long in power that the party which wished to get into office had become more powerful and more influential than the party which wished to remain in office.

It may be noticed that amongst these causes I have not included the personal unpopularity which, according to the assertion of his opponents, attached to M. Stambouloff, on account of his high-handed and arbitrary administration. I have made this omission purposely, because I do not believe that popular disapproval of the measures by which the late Premier maintained order was, in any sense, a general sentiment, or had anything to do with his fall. I have no doubt that M. Stambouloff was unpopular, and perhaps not unjustly unpopular, with the opponents whom he had thrown into prison or driven into exile. All I contend is that his rough system of administration, based as it was upon the principle that the enforcement of justice is more important than the means by which justice is enforced, did not outrage general opinion in Bulgaria, but, on the contrary, commanded the approval of the great mass of M. Stambouloff's fellow-countrymen. To represent the downfall of his Ministry as being due to any outburst of national displeasure at his alleged violations of the letter of the law, seems to me, as to most people who know Bulgaria, not only untrue, but absolutely ludicrous.

Nor can I see any reason to suppose that either the home or the foreign policy of the Government will be modified to any material extent by the change of Ministry. Every Bulgarian Government, for many years to come, must administer the internal affairs of the country on the same general principles as those adopted by M. Stambouloff. The only difference will be that these principles are likely to be applied with less resolution, less judgment, and less knowledge of the country than were displayed by their originator. Upon questions of foreign policy the present Government may be a shade less pro-Austrian than its predecessor, but it will, I feel confident, prove equally anti-Russian. If—a contingency which I deem most improbable—M. Stoiloff and his colleagues should display any disposition to place the country once more under Russian influence or control, both the Prince and his people would be unanimous as to the necessity of recalling M. Stambouloff to office.

In certain respects, I consider that the change of Ministry is likely to be by no means an unmixed evil. The fact that so important a crisis has been unaccompanied by any disturbance of the peace or by any outbreak of popular violence on one side or the other, furnishes a strong testimony to the progress that Bulgaria has already made in the art of self-government. If the elections are held under the present Ministry, my expectation is that on this, as on all previous occasions, the Government will succeed by some means or other in returning a majority of the representatives. But owing to the great personal popularity and influence of the late Premier, there is certain to be, what there has never been yet, a really formidable Opposition party in the Sobranje;

and if this party is led by M. Stambouloff, the antagonism between the Ministerialists and the Opposition will do much to convert popular government in Bulgaria from a form into a reality. I expect also the ultimate result of the recent crisis will be to place the relations between the Prince and the late Prime Minister on a sounder footing, to render the former more convinced of the extreme importance of retaining M. Stambouloff's services in the present condition of affairs, and to cause the latter to become more fully alive to the expediency of studying the not unreasonable susceptibilities of a Prince, the interests of whose dynasty are for the present almost indissolubly connected with those of Bulgaria.

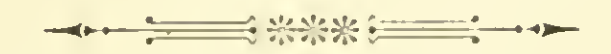
Altogether I can see nothing, in the events which have occurred since my departure, to modify in any way the favourable opinion which I formed during my sojourn in the Principality, and which I have endeavoured to express in the foregoing pages, as to the present condition and future prospects of the Peasant State.

THE END.

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